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# THE WHITE-FACED PACER:

OR,

BEFORE AND AFTER THE BATTLE.

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BY JOHN NEAL.

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# THE WHITE-FACED PACER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

THE family were all gathered about a large open fire-place. Two huge back-logs, half-a-dozen fore-sticks, and a pile of brush—enough to supply a modern fire-place for a month—were in full blast. The green wood began to smoke and steam, pouring out the sap from both ends like yeast—the lighted pitch-knots underneath, to send up the vast gorge of the chimney a cloud of thick black smoke and fierce crimson flame—and the hemlock brush to crackle and sparkle with a most alarming vehemence and pertinacity.

Upon the wooden settles that occupied each corner of the fire-place were seated the elder children—Joshua, Joseph and Thankful; upon the dye-pot, Nathan, a graduate of Yale College, at home for a Thanksgiving visit, previous to opening a school for the winter; upon five blocks of wood—sawed off the ends of the large timber at the new meeting-house—five other children, between the ages of three and eight; and upon the only three chairs ever allowed in the kitchen, with tall straight backs and flag bot-



toms, mended with list and leather, Elder Hale, the father, Aunt Nabby, the mother, and the hired man—the hired girl, or *help*, having taken possession of the front room, for the accommodation of Squire Farley, a young lawyer from the other side the river, who had engaged her to sit up with him every Saturday night till after Thanksgiving.

The floor had just been newly sanded and swept with a new hemlock broom into a great variety of herring-bone patterns; old Watch, the house-dog, had crawled out upon the hearth, and lay with his nose in the ashes; the Bible had been brought forth and reverently placed upon a large round cherry-tree table, which was never used for any thing else; the old man's spectacles were laid upon the open page, and his eyes were fixed upon the clock.

At this moment, a loud rapping was heard upon the topmost panel of the front door, as if with the butt end of a loaded whip or a horseman's pistol.

There was a look of astonishment in all their faces, but nobody spoke. The rapping was repeated. The old man looked at Joseph, nodded in silence, and Joseph got up and went to the door, which opened through a sort of porch directly into the kitchen where they were assembled, and having set his shoulder directly against it, and loosened the huge wooden latch, it sprung open with great violence, a tempest of snow entered the room, and in the midst of it was seen a horse's head, with a man muffled up to the eyes, leaning forward, as if rather disposed to continue his journey toward the fire-place without dismounting.



"Sarvant, sir; won't you alight and walk in? It's a'most an awful storm," said Joseph.

"No, thankee, my lad. I only want to know where I am."

"Why, you're abut a—hadn't yer better, though?"

Here another tremendous gust blew down the chimney, and filled the whole room with smoke, and sending a torrent of sparks right into the face of horse and rider both. Neither of them stirred, though the heavy mane and shaggy forelocks were lifted in the whirling blast, putting a stop to all further conversation for several minutes.

"I say though, friend," continued the youth, taking the beast by the bridle as he spoke, and trying to catch a glimpse of the rider.

"Hold your tongue, Joseph! Hadn't you better jump off, sir, and warm yourself, and take a mouthful o' supper and a drink o' cider," said his father, getting up, and pointing to a large pewter mug that stood sizzling between two large masses of rock, that served for andirons. "You'll find a comfortable seat and a hearty welcome here, I promise you."

"No, I thank yer, old gentleman."

"Hadn't ye better, now?"

"How far is it to the nearest tavern?"

"There ain't no tavern hereabouts, or none to speak of," continued Elder Hale; "so, if you ain't obleeged to keep on, why maybe you'd better put up here; we'll do our best to make yer comfortable. Here Josh, here Nathan, up with yer, about the quickest, yer lazy whelps, you, an' take the stranger's beast to the barn."



Up jumped Joshua, the eldest, and Nathan, the graduate, and all the rest of the family began to gather about the door, the hired man among them, with his hands in his trousers' pockets half way up to the elbows, all staring at the horse, and wondering at the strange brightness of his eyes, and still more that he didn't flinch at the blazing fire and rushing sparks. At last, and before the stranger had time to recollect himself, for he was evidently undecided, a dismal whispering was heard among the children, and then there was a scream, and then the door of the front room was burst open, and forth rushed Squire Farley with a countenance of unspeakable terror, followed by Keturah, the help, staggering and breathless.

Again there poured forth a torrent of red sparks from the chimney, old Watch began to show his teeth and creep toward the door, the horse snorted and threw up his head, so as to twitch the bridle out of Joseph's hands, who seemed to have lost the power of speech, and the next moment horse and rider both disappeared in a whirlwind of snow.

For a whole minute after they had vanished, the old man stood at the door, with his hand over his eyes, looking into the darkness after them, and for many minutes not a loud word was spoken.

"Father," whispered the youngest, a child of three, with teeth chattering and eyes as big as saucers, "father, *was it the white-faced pacer?*"

At this moment the clock struck *five*. Coming from a large and almost empty room, and listened to



with open mouths and beating hearts, in the unearthly stillness it sounded preternaturally loud.

"I *knew* that clock was too slow," said the old man, with a somewhat altered voice; "full five minutes too slow, yer see. I'll warrant ye that stranger knew the time to a second."

All eyes were turned upon him, but nobody ventured to speak.

"Shet the door, Joseph—shet the door and *bar* it," he continued. "D'ye hear?"

"*Bar* it, father?"

"Yes, *bar* it. The sun has set. The week's labor is over. The Sabbath of the Lord has begun. We shall have no further disturbance to-night. Let us pray."

Prayer followed, and a chapter in the Bible selected for the occasion; after which, one passage was dwelt upon with great earnestness and explained. It was Samuel i., 28, where Saul, and the woman having a familiar spirit, are mentioned as having held communion with the spirit of Samuel.

These exercises over, the children had their supper of hasty-pudding and milk, and were sent off to bed, while the others continued huddled together about the fire, looking straight into the ashes, with their knees apart, and both hands spread to the glowing warmth; now twirling their thumbs, and now rubbing their shins, or lifting the cider to their mouths, at long intervals, in profound silence, while Aunt Nabby kept repeating, for the fiftieth time, that she never knew but one such storm in her life, and that lasted ~~a week~~, and no wonder, "for the white-faced pacer



was out with the Northern Lights 'most all the time; and they do say she was seen to go by the meetin'-house door, while Parson Pairpint was a-christenin' old Marm Larrabee's first baby. No wonder it came to the gallows at last."

"Why, mother, how can you pay any regard to such stories?" whispered Nathan.

"Hold your tongue, boy!" said the father. "What can you know about sich matters?"

"But, father—

"Shet up, I say! How dare ye speak to your mother after that fashion? Hear what the Lord saith:" opening the Bible, as he spoke, and reading with the greatest possible solemnity the following passage: "'The eye that mocketh at his *father*, and despiseth to obey his *mother*, the ravens of the valley shall pick out, and the young eagles shall eat.'"

Poor Nathan smiled, and then grew very red in the face. The hired man groaned aloud, and Keturah, she contrived to touch the toe of Squire Farley, who looked up at the clock, had no idea it was so late, glanced at the windows, already white with snow, and thought, on the whole, it was time to be going.

But no. The family understood their business better. And while the daughters were bustling about and getting ready for the morrow, and the boys were arranging their newly-greased shoes, and hanging up their wet buskins to dry—long woollen stockings that reached above the knee, and shaped like gaiters where they came down over the shoes, to which they were secured by a strap passing under-



neath; for boots, as everybody in all the Colonies knew, being only "shoes at a guinea a pair," according to the published calculations of old Ben Franklin, the printer, nobody thought of wearing such unprofitable contrivances in the country—the old folks began to prepare for bed, the father by unbuttoning the knees of his corduroy breeches and loosening his gaiters, and Aunt Nabby by warming her night-cap, inside out, and wrapping an old woolen petticoat over a piece of pine plank, which, beside being "a sartin cure for the roomatiz and nightmare," was no bad thing for cold feet in the dead of winter.

In five minutes more the kitchen would have been empty of all but Keturah, the help, and Squire Farley, who began to exhibit very unequivocal signs of impatience, and no great willingness to betake himself alone to a distant and rather cold apartment, where a fire had been kept all day to no purpose, with such a *scarecrow*, as he called the handsome, healthy and happy-looking girl he had come to spark it with, when reproaching her with timidity.

But just as Aunt Nabby had taken up a large, old-fashioned brass candlestick, the only thing of the sort to be found in all that region—it was a wedding present from old grandmother Trip, and her constant companion for years, having visited as much, and seen just about as much of the ways of the world, at one time, as the dear old woman herself; both having been borrowed, for all great occasions, as long as they lasted, by all the young housekeepers of the neighborhood for full three-quarters of a century—well, just as Aunt Nabby had taken up the old brass



candlestick, and was about fixing in the socket a candle of bayberry tallow, about the size of your little finger, and as green as a leek, a loud rap was heard at the back-door—another and another—*one, two, three!*

“Marcy on us!” cried Aunt Nabby, dropping the bayberry candle into the ashes.

“Oh, *my!* oh, *dear!* what’s that!” shrieked the *help*, while Comfort and Thankful and Eunice huddled together in silence, and the boys moved toward the back door in a body, and Watch got up and shook himself, and bristled all over, as if ready to leap at the throat of any thing that should venture to appear in that quarter.

“Who’s there?” said the old man.

There was no answer. The wind roared down the chimney, the snow rattled, as if mixed with rain and hail, against the windows, and the old house shook to its foundations.

“Who’s there, I say?” shouted the old man again, with the whole strength of his voice, reaching up his hand as he called, and grasping a seven-foot rifle which hung over the fire-place. “Stand back, *boys*, and let me see what’s to pay.”

The boys obeyed, their teeth chattering in spite of all they could do, and the old man went straight to the door, and was opening it, when lo! the knocking was repeated at the front door—*one, two, three!*

“Father—father, I saw somebody looking into the window!” shrieked the youngest daughter, dropping into a chair, and covering her face with her hands.

Nathan sprang to the door, pulled it open by main



force, and, bareheaded as he was, plunged into the snow and the darkness, followed by Joseph and Joshua, and Squire Farley, the hired man holding back and shaking his head, and the old gentleman shouting after them, at the top of his voice, to come back, or the Philistines would be upon them. But they heeded him not—they heard him not; and the family were left wondering, with the door wide open, and the snow driving in up to the very hearth, until, at the end of a few minutes, the boys returned, leading in a poor distracted creature, who began to rave about the white-faced pacer, which he declared he had seen three times that very evening; and once, while he was under the bridge, picking his way along as best he could in the fierce wind and blinding drift, which had completely blocked up the roads, he heard a clattering of hoofs in the air, and happening to look up, he saw between him and the sky, the apparition of a horse and rider at full speed, going over the bridge on the stringers, all the planks having been taken up the day before to repair it.

“Poh, poh, neighbor Trip, the thing’s impossible. He don’t know what he’s sayin’.”

“Don’t I? And maybe I didn’t see her again, just as I had got up the hill, steerin’ right straight into your front door? And you’d like to make me believe, maybe, how’t when I got to your back door, not five minutes ago, I didn’t happen to see her agin, the torminted critter, gallopin’ right through the lower orchard, back o’ the new growth, full split, with her great black mane risin’ and fallin’ at every plunge, con-sarn it all.”



"So, then, it was you that knocked at both doors, just now, was it?"

"I? No, indeed. I only knocked at the front door, and when I heerd her a-comin', just took to my heels, I tell ye, about the quickest."

"Her? Who?"

"Her—who? Why, there now, Elder Hale, jest as ef you didn't know who 'twas, as well as anybody!"

"Perhaps I may; but who did you say it was?"

"I? Well, I say it was the—the—" and looking about on all sides and catching his breath. "I say it was the *white-faced pacer*—there!"

"I thought so—Lord have massy on us, if I didn't!" cried Aunt Nabby. "And now, Jonathan Hale," speaking to her husband, "I'll tell you what it is, Jonathan: it's my belief that this 'ere house is haunted, and the sooner we git it off our hands the better, for I've no idee of battlin' with the powers o' the air. Oh, Lord, there it comes again! One—two—three—oo-oo-oogh!"

"Three times three; upon my word, wife, it is very extraordinary. Boys!"

"Father!"

"You needn't all go to bed to-night. Keep the doors barred. Let nobody in without consultin' me."

Here the help interchanged a look with the squire, the hired man showed his teeth, Nathan proposed to ride and tie, half the time in the kitchen and the other half in the best room.

"Where's your duck gun, Josh? Get her up, and lay in a good charge o' buckshot. I'll take this into



my room. All your axes in good order, hey? Twenty-five years ago I should have been afraid of Injuns, now I'm more afraid of the Prince of Darkness and the evil spirits that have been let loose within a few months from the bottomless pit."

There was no further disturbance that night. But Nathan Hale, who went down to the bridge as soon as there was light enough to see, found there, to his unspeakable consternation and dismay, the impress of a horse's shoe, with sharp corks, as if newly shod, the whole length of the main stringer of the bridge, at an elevation of nearly forty feet from the water, a deep and rapid stream thundering below, and heaping the ice upon the shore by cart-loads. It made him dizzy to look down upon it. But there could be no mistake; there were the tracks, and no mortal man, after looking at them, could doubt that a horse had passed over, since the planks were taken up. But how? By what earthly power? For earthly power it must be, after all; it could have been no shadow; it must have been something substantial, to leave such marks. But, again, who was it, at night, in the dead of winter, and in such a terrible storm? And by that perilous path? The more he thought of it, the more he was perplexed. He told his father, and his father went down to see the tracks, and having measured and counted them, he shook his head, and entreated his son to say nothing about the affair to mortal man, but to *watch and pray*, for evil days were at hand.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE THANKSGIVING DINNER.

THANKSGIVING was now at hand. All the descendants of each family, even to the youngest of the third and fourth generations, were to be gathered together once more about the huge fire-places and warm-hearted, old-fashioned supper-tables of the land. Nothing short of sickness, or a distance not to be overcome in the winter season by the steadfast energy of a New Englander on his way back to the home of his fathers, would be accepted, or even thought of, for an excuse.

It was now the twenty-fifth of November. The snow was very deep—the roads through a large portion of the country were no longer passable; the crust was thick enough to bear a loaded ox team—and, look where you might, you would see the trees bending under the weight of ice and snow, new paths broken in every direction to avoid the drifts, and literally running over the tops of the fences and stone walls.

There had been services at the meeting-house for half the day, as on the Sabbath; and arrangements were made in every quarter for a late dinner—that is, at half-past twelve or one, the days being so very short, and every body having so far to go after dark.



“Come, bustle, boys, bustle! Where’s Nathan? Where the plague is Nathan to-day? an’ Joshua, and Timothy, and the rest o’ the boys? Always out o’ the way when they’re wanted!” screamed Aunt Nabby.

“Wal, mother, what’s to pay now?”

“What’s to pay! Why, don’t you see that are stranger a ploughin’ through the orchard there, an’ a leadin’ his poor beast by the bridle, as if they’d lost their way, an’ both on ’em was tired e’en jist to death? Run arter him this minnit, one of yer, and ask him to stop and take dinner with us; tell him it’s e’en a’most ready now, an’ ’twill be on the table in a few minutes, an’ a plenty o’ room, an’ enOUGH to eat, too, such as ’tis, an’ he shall be welcome, an’ we shall be glad to see him, and so will father—run away!”

“Pretty good, *what thar is of it*, hey mother?” said Nathan, as he prepared to follow the stranger, “an’ enough of it, too, *seck as it is*; that’s what you want me to say, *I know!*” and off he ran to overtake the stranger. But before he was able to head him off, his attention was called to another quarter, and he stopped, thinking he heard his father’s voice:

“Hallo, Nathan; where’ve you ben? Why didn’t you come before?”

Whereupon another voice replied, almost at his elbow:

“I did, father!”

“You lie, you dog, ye didn’t come at all!” answered the first voice.

And then there was a long, loud, and hearty laugh,



resembling his father's, which sounded like a bell, through the still, frosty atmosphere.

"Wal, if that laugh don't beat all natur! Never heard him laugh like that on a 'Thanksgivin' day, sence I breathed the breath o' life. I wonder if the stranger heard it. I say, Mister; halloo there!"

But the stranger kept riding on, without turning his head.

Nathan was preparing for another effort, and had just cleared a stone wall, and a huge drift on the other side, at a single bound, when he heard the voice of his father from a different quarter; and turning his head, saw him at the back door, waving his hand to him to come back.

The stranger heard the voice, too, and stopped. Nathan was rather puzzled for a moment. If he returned without obeying his mother, it would be too late to secure the stranger, and then he called to mind the passage of Scripture to which his father had begged his attention with so much earnestness and solemnity, and then he thought of the ravens of the valley and the young eagles, and of Proverbs xxx. 17, and put his hands to his eyes. But, then, if he failed to obey his father, who might have the best of reasons for not inviting the stranger, he was sure to get a thrashing. Before he had made up his mind which course to take, the stranger himself decided the question, by turning full upon him, and asking him what he wanted of him.

Though somewhat embarrassed by the suddenness of the question, and by the odd appearance of the stranger—a little, old man, with a very large head—



and somewhat startled at the sound of his voice, which reminded him of something which he had heard before, somewhere,—he could not recollect where—Nathan proceeded to deliver, word for word, the message of his mother; but, his father getting impatient, and repeating his call with a voice not to be misunderstood a moment longer, he pointed to the barn, and, begging the stranger to put up his beast for himself, as he was wanted at home, renewing the assurance that father and mother, and all the family, would be glad to have him take Thanksgiving with them, he hurried back to the house.

When he reached the door, the first question he heard was in the sternest voice of his father, who asked:

“Who is that man?”

“How should I know, father? I never saw him afore!”

“What was you sayin’ to him?”

Nathan repeated the message of his mother, who stood by, fidgeting with her apron, sounding her deep, outside pockets, and marvelling at the seriousness of her husband.

“Was that all?”

“Yes, father—”

“Every word; look me in the face, Nathan.”

“Every word, father.”

“Nathan Hale! Do you want to walk out to the barn with me?”

“*Father!*”—and the countenance of the youth glowed with indignation—“*Father!* I dont know what you mean. I’ve told you the truth, an’ nothin’



but the truth, an' if I'm to take a switchin', I should be glad to know what it's for."

"Why, Jonathan Hale!" cried the mother, dropping both hands in amazement, "you wouldn't think o' givin' the boy a whippin' at his age!"

"At his age! an' why not?"

"Arter sendin' him to college, too!"

"Arter sendin' him to college! Why, for that very reason, an' all the sooner, if he deserves it. What's the use o' goin' to college, if it don't make people ashamed o' lyin'?"

"Of lying, father!" and the tears stood in the youth's eyes.

"Yes, boy, *of lying!* Didn't I hear you a talkin' to that are stranger before I called to you? an' didn't I hear a loud laugh—a loud, long, noisy laugh—I understood it, I promise ye—loud enough and long enough to disturb the whole neighborhood? And this right arter meetin', and on a Thanksgivin' day, too!"

"Why, Nathan Hale, I'm ashamed of yer," said his mother. "On a Thanksgivin' day, and right arter meetin'; did I ever. Why, what could the poor child a bin o' thinkin' of?"

Nathan was completely bewildered, and his father, mistaking his embarrassment for evidence of guilt not to be questioned, pointed once more to the barn, with a significant motion of his uplifted hand, as if he had a new goad in it, or a white oak switch.

"Father," continued Nathan, growing deadly pale as he spoke, "I have no desire to escape any punishment you may think I deserve, but this is Thanks-



givin' day, my brothers and sisters, and all their little ones are here, and you have no time for ascertaining the truth; and when I tell you that I heard the laugh you speak of, and that I thought it was *yours*—”

“*Mine!*” replied the father, stooping down and looking into Nathan's eyes, to see if he had understood him aright.

“*His!*” cried the mother—and the help, and the hired man, and Comfort, and Thankful, and Eunice, and Joseph, and Cousin Rachel, and half a dozen more, who had been attracted from the front room by the conversation at the door—*his!* father's, uncle's, Elder Hale's! Goodness me, what is the world a comin' to?”

“Yes, father—yes, mother; as sure as you're a standin' there. And, strange as it may seem to you, I had no doubt of it, not the least in the world, till father charged it upon me.”

“Silence, boy! We will have a further conversation to-morrow on the subject. You desire it, and I'm satisfied.”

“No, father, I have altered my mind. Now is the time—now or never!” buttoning up his coat, and looking round the room, as if in search of something. “It is but fifteen miles to the school district where I am to begin my labors to-morrow, and, rather than have the fear of a switchin' upon my mind all day and all night, I'll take my leave of you now.”

“Boy, do you know who I am?”

“Yes, father, and I know who I am!”

“And who *are* you?”

“A man, father—a full-grown man, made in the



image of God Almighty, and almost out of my time!"

The mother stood aghast, the children grew pale, and Keturah screamed outright.

"Boy!" continued the stern old man, after an awful pause; "boy, take your choice. Walk out to the barn this minute, and take off your jacket, without another word, or leave my house forever."

Nathan took his hat, finished buttoning up his jacket, even to the last button, and, turning to the door, would have left it forever, without speaking another word, or even looking into the eyes, or touching the hands of them that he most loved on earth, but for the sudden appearance of the stranger, who, having put up his horse, and got rid of the snow that encumbered him even to the waist, was now within two or three steps of the back door.

"Sarvent, sir—sarvent, marm!" said he, "I wish you a good day," and then he stopped and stood staring, first at one and then at another of the household. "Why, what's the matter—what's happened? Hope I don't come without leave," and then, turning to Nathan, who had just stooped to kiss his little brother, Jerry, as he tumbled head over heels into the snow, in turning to escape the outstretched arms of his dear little sister, Eunice, "I say, my young friend, ain't this your father's house, and ain't that your father, an' didn't you ax me just now to come an' spend 'Thanksgivin' with you, an' didn't you tell me to put up my horse, and make myself at home, hey?"

"To be sure I did," answered poor Nathan, stopping for a moment and pointing to his father; "to



be sure I did; but ask him, or mother, maybe I don't tell you the truth! Good day, sir. Father and mother, brothers and sisters, farewell; good-by, Watch—good-by, cousin Rachel!" and off he started, on his way through the nearest wood, followed by Watch, barking and tumbling about in the snow, half beside himself with joy.

"That boy will be the death of me yet," said the kind mother, looking after him with tears in her eyes.

But the old man spoke not a word.

"Why wouldn't he own it? What was there to be ashamed of, I should like to know?" continued the mother. "It was the noisiest laugh I ever *did* hear in all my life, that's a fact, and it did sartinly sound a little like—ahem. But boys will be boys, an' I dare say the poor child forgot 'twas 'Thanks-givin' day; but what could possess him to deny it?"

The stranger looked up with surprise.

"Poh, poh, wife, shut the door, an' come in to dinner. It's ben a waitin' half an hour, the least minnit," continued the father, in a tone of affected indifference.

"Stop; one word with you before I break bread under your roof," said the stranger. "Your name is Hale, I believe—Jonathan Hale?"

"It is."

"You are an elder in the Church of the Lord, are you not?"

"I am."

"Judging by what I have just heard, you have turned that young man out of doors—your son, I take it."



Elder Hale nodded.

“And for what?”

“At any other time, friend, I should say it was none of your business. But I see you mean well enough, and therefore—what may I call your name?”

“Ebenezer Day.”

“Well, Ebenezer Day, the boy has told me a lie, and I gave him his choice to take a switchin’—for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth—or to leave my house forever.”

“And so he chose to leave your house forever, the home of his fathers, in the dead of winter, with all his family about him, on a Thanksgivin’ day, too, when the stranger that is within your gate is to be filled with fatness and made welcome, and no human being—none but your own child, the fruit of your own loins, is allowed to go empty away. O, man, man!”

The father and mother were awe-struck; and the father turned his eyes toward the dark, dismal-looking pine barren into which the youth was just entering, as if in his heart he wished he had not been altogether so harsh with him.

And how know you that he *lied*? The young man did not look to me like one who could be guilty of any thing so base and pitiful as a lie, continued Ebenezer Day. “How know you that he did not speak the truth? What evidence have you?”

“Evidence enough to satisfy a father, friend—the evidence of my own senses.”

“Oh, that’s another matter. I have nothing more to say. But,” in a low, distant voice, like one com-



muning with himself, "I would have staked my right hand on his truth, if I had only been left to judge by his countenance, and by the sorrowful look of his eyes when he turned away from the door. Well, well, there's no trusting to appearances. My right hand! nay, I would have risked my life on his truth!"

"Come, come, friend Ebenezer, dinner's ready; we've no time to lose—take a seat by the fire, you must be chilled through with your ride."

"My walk you mean. I have had precious little riding to do for one while. My beast gave out last night at twelve o'clock precisely, and it's now well nigh two, I see."

"Indeed—"

"By this time the large goose had been taken down from the string where it had hung twirling before the kitchen fire, and was dished forthwith in a huge wooden tray, along with the baked beans, the Indian puddings, the apple pies, the mince pies, the pumpkin pies, and the custard pies, the flapjacks, the generous brown bread, the apply dowdy, the doughnuts, the apple-sauce, and the brown mugs of cider. This done, the company seated, and every thing ready for grace, even to the ducks and the geese, and that everlasting cold chicken pie, without which no Thanksgiving dinner was ever complete, that ceremony followed—no trifle in that day and on such occasions, let me tell you; and hence the fashion of dishing at the last moment. That over, the old man started up from his chair, and lifting his fork, let drive at the breast of a magnificent goose, and, bid-



ding them fall to, and help themselves, at it they went, hammer and tongs.

“But in the very midst of the dinner, up started the stranger from his chair—he had been whispering with the mother a minute or two before—and stretching forth a prodigious hand toward the master of the feast, he commanded him—ay, *commanded* him, as one having authority—to saddle his fleetest horse, and send for his boy to come back!

The old man stared, and the children dropped their knives and forks, and gazed at the speaker—at his prodigious hands, his bright, clear eyes, and strange-looking head—in half stupid amazement. Even the mother—aunt Nabby herself, began to think she had gone too far in her Thanksgiving hospitality, and that this ransacking of highways and hedges for guests at a pinch, was not exactly the thing for this country.

“Do you hear?” continued the stranger; “do you hear, Jonathan Hale? You have wronged that noble boy—you have dishonored a man-child lent you by Jehovah himself. I know he told you the truth. I have heard the whole story from your wife. Not a word passed between us before the invitation; it was not he that laughed.”

“Not he! Who was it, then?”

“It was I.”

“You! What, Ebenezer Day, would you try to persuade me that you are capable of counterfeiting *my* laugh?”

“To be sure I would. Ha, ha, ha! Haw, haw, haw!”



Every living creature at the table started with astonishment, and two or three pushed back their chairs. The laugh was so perfectly that of Elder Hale, that he himself half rose from his seat, and stood as if thunder-struck, looked about for a moment, as if bewildered, and then slid back gradually into his chair.

“And the conversation I heard between you,” continued he; “the language of my boy, and the voice of—of—of—why, what am I to believe next?” and then he stopped, as if completely puzzled by the disclosures of the stranger. At last he added, “I was not near enough to distinguish the words, but I could have sworn to the voice of my poor boy. How do you explain that?”

“Judge for yourself,” replied the stranger, and he repeated the dialogue that Nathan heard: “‘Why didn’t you come afore? I did father. You lie, you dog; you didn’t come at all,’” counterfeiting the voices of father and son so admirably, that in spite of all they could do, the younger members of the family all burst out a laughing together, and, after a short inward struggle, the mother followed, Keturah, the hired man, Joseph, Joshua, and at last the old gentleman himself.

“And now,” continued the stranger, “now that you know the truth, will you not send for your boy—your generous, noble-hearted boy—and beseech him to forgive you?”

“I would, but I have no horse at liberty. They are all engaged.”

“Take mine.”



"Yours! Why, you just told us you had bin obleeged to go afoot ever since twelve o'clock last night; and that your beast gin out, if I understood you, fourteen hours ago."

"And what o' that? She'll go ahead of any thing to be found in this part o' the world, I'll warrant you, now't she's had her sulks out, and a mouthful of oats."

"No, no, my friend. You'll want your horse all fresh in the morning, and I've just thought of a plan. Joe, take the white mare and the brown colt. Ride the mare till you overtake Nathan—look up, will ye. Then do you take the colt, and give him the mare. Tell him he's forgiven—"

"No, boy; tell him he was wronged. Tell him his father sends after him, and asks to be forgiven, and prays him to come back."

"Do if you dare!" said the old man, smiling, and trying to look stern. Joe stopped as if waiting further orders. "There, there, get along, will ye; go and tell him what you please, my boy, provided you bring him back before the sun has gone down upon his wrath. Upon my word, Ebenezer, I am so thankful to find that boy, upon whom I have spent so much of my substance—that boy, the hope of my old age, (his voice trembled), has not been guilty of untruth. Lord God of our fathers!" he added, after a devout pause, "I thank thee!" and the aged man covered his face with his hands, and leaned both elbows on the table.

"I say, though, father," said Joe, reappearing at the back door, and thrusting his head in, without ob-



serving the position of things, "I say, though, father, why not take the sleigh?"

"Blockhead! putty sleighin' you'd have, through the pine barren and over the top o' the stumps, off with ye!"

Bang went the door, and off went Joe like a two and forty pounder.

Within three hours, and long before the plays and frolics of the evening, the blind man's buff, the nuts and apples, and the story-telling were well underway, Nathan re-appeared, entered, hesitated, and then, after a short struggle, walked up to his father and shook hands with him, and then turned to his mother, and for the first time in his life perhaps, in the presence of strangers, threw his arms around her neck and kissed her.

The old woman laughed, and looked about her, and then began to sob; whereat the old man called her a simpleton, and began to snuffle himself. "Come, come!" said he, at last, "enough of this, be quiet, children, let your brother alone. You're welcome back, Nathan, and I'm glad to find you told the truth, and that's enough. Be still, I say, can't you let him alone!"

And now came the plays—fox and geese, morris, trials of strength with the hands and feet, between the males, and many a sly joke between the females—Keturah and Squire Farley—Timothy and a neighbor's hired girl coming in for a full share of good natured practical jokes, and sly pinches.

In the midst of the uproar—for the sun having gone down, uproar was lawful now—the stranger called for a Bible and key.



At first the old man demurred; but having understood that they were wanted for the exhibition of a problem, which had begun to attract the attention of the fathers, he consented.

The family Bible being brought forth, a large iron key was firmly attached to it with a string, in such a way, that while the lower half was inserted midway between the leaves, the upper part projected far enough to permit one to hold it by the bow and balance it on his fingers.

“Young man,” continued the stranger, turning to Joshua, “You are the oldest—let me begin with you. Come here—place yourself on that block just opposite me. Rest your right elbow on your knee to steady it. Now, put the tip of your fore-finger under the lower side of the bow, just as you see me—there, there, steady—it turns you see with the slightest motion. There—now hold your hand perfectly still—motionless—keep your finger exactly in a line with mine; if you hold it away, the key will turn of itself, and carry the Bible with it. Now—look steadily at either end of the Bible you please, though the end furthest from you will be the easier; and *will* it to turn the way you like.

“I don’t know as I understand you—’spose I want it to go that way, toward father.”

“Why, then, you will speak to it, as you would to a dog or a child, *in your own mind*, I mean, without letting me know which way you want it to go, and you will see it obey you, as if it understood your thought.”

“I don’t believe a word on’t!” said Joshua, looking half frightened, at his father.”



"I'm sorry for that," replied the stranger.

"One ought to have faith enough to move mountains, perhaps," added Nathan.

"No—it matters little whether he believes or not, now; he soon will—he can't help himself after trying two or three times—the only difficulty now is, that in proportion as he wants faith, exactly in that proportion will he forbear to fix his mind—to *will* energetically. Come! are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Not a word to be spoken—fix your eyes on the end nearest me, and determine in your mind that it *shall* turn this way or that, I care not which—and back again if you like—just as if you knew it would obey you."

"But I can't—how can I?"

"Try—try"—

Joshua tried; and lo! the Bible began to turn, but very slowly, and, as it were, doubtfully, and reluctantly; and Joseph grew very red in the face. Then it stopped, and after a moment or two, it began to turn the other way. Joseph grew very pale, and his father began to grow uneasy.

"By Gosh, father! it does turn the way I want it to—if it don't I wish I may be skinned."

"Poh, poh, my boy; try it again, but don't act like a fool."

It was tried again, and again, and always with the same result; and while the father began to look very grave, and some of the girls were trying to giggle their eldest brother out of countenance, the youngest was pointing her finger at the stranger's shadow on



the wall, hideous and grotesque enough to frighten the boldest; and Nathan was watching the stranger's eyes, in the hope of discovering there some explanation of the trick. But all to no purpose, the same expression of truth; the same clear, steady look of the eye, and the same corrugation of the bold rocky forehead continued.

"And now," added the stranger, "we will try the same experiment in another shape. Just now when you were exerting your will, you took notice, I dare say, that I turned off my eyes—"

"Yes, and fixed them on the clock—"

"No, I didn't, but I fixed them on that great brass candlestick that stands near it, on the mantle-piece; and which, between ourselves, neighbor, I must have seen before; it looks to me like an old acquaintance."

"Very likely, friend; it has been borrowed by every newly-married pair within twenty miles of us, for the last forty years, I verily believe."

"Ah, ha! that explains the mystery. I knew I'd seen it before; and in a few minutes I'll convince you of the fact, and now," turning to Joshua, he added—"now, my lad, while you try to make the Bible turn that way toward your father, I'll try to make it turn against him, and we shall then know whose will is the strongest."

"Stop, stranger, not against father, if you please. Hadn't you better try to make it turn the other way, Josh?"

"Poh, poh; would you have the eldest son trying to turn the Bible *against* his own father?" And



saying this, the stranger smiled, but but the father looked troubled, and the children gathered nearer, and stood about in a circle, stooping low, with their hands upon their knees, and their eyes fixed upon the Bible, wondering where all these experiments were to end.

“All ready, my man.”

“Yes, all ready.”

“Begin, then. You try to make it revolve that way—I, this.”

The struggle began. For a minute or more, the Bible wavered, stood stock still, wavered again, and then began to turn very slowly—then faster and faster, till with a sudden whirl it dropped from the fingers upon the floor.

The old man jumped up and declared it should not be treated so irreverently; but after some persuasion and probably wishing to try it himself, he yielded, upon condition that somebody should stand by to catch it, if it fell again.

Joshua tried next, and then Timothy, and then the girls, and then the father, and always with the same result, when they had the stranger to deal with; but when they tried it between themselves, the results varied; the most energetic were uniformly triumphant over the more sluggish.

“It’s all a trick, I see that plainly,” added the old man. “But still I do not understand it.”

“A trick, hey? Judge for yourself. Take that Bible and key into your own hands. Try the experiment with yourself, Jonathan Hale. Rest the key on the tips of your fore-fingers, and then if you find it obey you, tell me there is a trick.”



The old man hesitated; and then, shutting his mouth firmly, and rolling up his sleeves, he took the key upon his two fore-fingers, and after repeated trials, the key turning first one way, and then the other, acknowledged that it did *seem* to obey his will in every case.

“Mr. Day,” said Nathan, “just allow me to try, if you please. I think I understand the mystery now.”

The trial was had, and the youth acknowledged that he was mistaken, and that the key did obey his will, though he was not conscious of the slightest movement of his finger. “That I can cause it to revolve which way I like by a slight turn of the finger—the slightest in the world, is true; and that the nerves and muscles are so delicately interwoven, as perhaps, to obey the will, and convey the motion without consciousness on my part, may also be true; but, but—”

The stranger looked at him in evident surprise.

“But still,” continued the youth, “Still I am not satisfied. Let me have the book, and try it with myself. “Now,” he added, as he balanced the key upon the tip of his fore-finger, “*now*, to produce the motion that follows my will here, there must be a very complicated and contradictory play of the muscles. One finger must work the problem one way, and the other the opposite way; and both for the first time. No, no, I am not satisfied.”

“Well, then, allow me to satisfy you,” said the stranger. “Try the experiment with me.” He did so, and Nathan’s will appeared to be the strongest.



Whenever the stranger looked away from the Bible, it began to turn immediately, and make a complete revolution, so that somebody had to catch it, or it would have fallen to the floor. On the contrary, whenever he fixed his eyes upon the end furthest from him, a struggle appeared to take place, the key would tremble like a magnet, and it would be often, and for a considerable time, uncertain which way the Bible would turn.

“Are you satisfied now?” asked the stranger.

“No, sir; I am not. I wish to try it with some other material, and with some other book. I don’t believe the Bible has anything to do with it, but possibly the iron of the key may.”

The stranger smiled, and patted Nathan on the back.

“You are wrong, my man,” said he; “but that’s no fault of yours. You deserve to be right. You reason like a philosopher, and I am not a little pleased with having made your acquaintance. And now for one more experiment—one more trial with me. Here you, Comfort, this way; when the Bible begins to tremble, put your fore finger upon your brother’s right shoulder, and add your will to his.”

“I shan’t, sir, I’m sure!” said Comfort, trembling from head to foot, and skulking behind her mother’s chair. “I’m no believer in such nonsense.”

“Do as you are bid, child; what do you mean by such talk?” said Aunt Nabby.

“Yes, mother. And having obeyed, the key flew round with a portentous jerk, and again the Bible touched the floor. “There, I told you so! I don’t



believe a word of it," cried the poor, frightened girl running off to hide her face in her mother's lap.

"Enough o' that," cried Elder Hale.

"So I say," answered the stranger. "Now hand me that brass candlestick. Fifty years ago, on the twenty-fifth day of December—just one month from this day—I'd wager a trifle I had that very candlestick in my possession."

"Fifty years ago—you?" exclaimed the mother. "Well, if ever!"

"Yes, and not a little remarkable is it that we should meet again *where* we do. I have never seen it since—though I believe I know where it's fellow is—and if I am right," he continued, taking it into his hand as he spoke—"stay, has it ever been repaired? ever been to the brazier's or blacksmith's?"

"Never, to my knowledge," said the father.

"Well, then, perhaps I can show you something stranger than the Bible and key. In the bottom of this candlestick you will find a"—turning it in his hand so as to unscrew the bottom—"ah, here we have it; an old-fashioned silver thimble, you see, that once belonged to Grandmother Trip! Examine it for yourselves!"

"Goodness me, and so there is, I declare," cried Aunt Nabby. "And so you knowed Grandmother Trip, hey?"

"Know her! To be sure I did, almost from her youth up."

"Why, how you talk!"

"Almost from her youth up!" exclaimed Elder Hale.



"Why, what may be your age?"

"My age! Nobody knows," exclaimed the stranger; "I do not know myself, but old enough to be a quiet grandfather."

His attention was called off just here, by some inquiry about the white-faced pacer. One of the children, who sat near cousin Rachel, was whispering very earnestly in her ear, and had got as far as the snow-storm.

The stranger appeared to listen, stopped, leaned toward the child; and, when the tracks found upon the stringers of the bridge the next day by Nathan and father, were mentioned, he was observed to grow suddenly pale, and to gasp for breath, and then to snatch at the wall. Nathan sprang forward to catch him, or he would have fallen.

"Water! water! A drop of water, for the love of Heaven!" he cried, as soon as he could speak; but before they could bring it, he rose and staggered to the door, which appeared to open of itself, and in tumbled Timothy, head first, crying out, as if pursued by an evil spirit!

"Oh, Jonathan, Jonathan!" he shouted; "oh, Joshua, Joshua! run out to the barn, and see what's the matter with the dumb beasts! The stranger's mare has broke loose, and the cattle and horses are all raving mad. Oh, Lord! there she comes, there she comes."

And sure enough, there she was, all saddled and bridled, with her head stuck forward into the door, and her eyes gleaming through her shaggy foretop, like burning coals, and her mane lifting and heaving and flapping at every breath, as if instinct with life.



Before a hand could be put forth to stop him, or a mouth opened to question him, the stranger had snatched his great coat, was into the saddle at one spring, and away went horse and rider, like stormy shadows over the glittering crust, at a speed that made the boldest catch their breath.

“Father, father!” cried Joseph, as the animal turned away, catching at his father’s arm as he spoke, “father! did you see the critter’s tail?”

The father looked at him for a moment, and shook his head, without speaking. Aunt Nabby dropped into a chair, the youngest children holding hard by her apron, and gazing up into her face in pitiable terror, and the eldest interchanging looks of downright consternation, with each other.

On going to the barn, they found the cattle running wild. The big bull had broken loose among the calves, and the colts, and the sheep, and while he was running hither and thither, and bellowing like all possessed, they were scampering about in all directions, and crying and bleating most piteously, as if hunted to death by wild beasts.

Upon further inquiry, it was ascertained that the stranger had put up his beast without taking off her saddle, and that instead of a bridle he rode her with a halter, which did not materially interfere with her eating, so that he was ready at any moment for a scamper.

After this, there were no more plays, nor story telling, and but very little talk. The company grew strangely still and thoughtful, and broke up early, and the family went to bed, not so much to sleep, as



to ponder over the apparition of the white-faced pacer. That they had now seen her face to face, and talked face to face with her rider, the Evil One perhaps, they never doubted for a moment after this, although nobody among them was quite willing to own it, and no questions were asked. But—but we must defer the rest for another chapter.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### DAY AFTER THANKSGIVING.

“LET me never hear the name of the white-faced pacer, nor that of Ebenezer Day, again, while ye breathe the breath o’ life, d’ye hear?” said Jonathan Hale, the next morning, as he opened the back-door, and found Nathan and Joshua and Joseph examining the tracks in the snow, and Comfort and Thankful and Eunice and cousin Rachel standing bare-headed on the steps, with their arms rolled up in their aprons and teeth chattering, to hear what the boys had to say upon the subject of the *white-faced pacer*.

“In to the house with ye, gals! Pretty piece o’ business to be sure! Hardly out of your beds, and long afore the cattle have been looked after, here you are, idlin’ an’ shonickin’ about the barn-yard, where’s your milk-pails? And why ain’t the breakfast table ready? I say you, Josh, why hain’t you got in a new backlog this morning? fine times to be sure. But I’ll see if I’m goin’ to have such



carryins on—start, will ye; what dy'e stand loiterin' about so for, hey; where's Nathan?"

"Here, father."

"*Here father!*" mimicking. "And why ain't ye off to your school, I should be glad to know?"

"Would you have me go without my breakfast, father? it's a long way through the snow, and school don't begin till afternoon."

"Without your breakfast, hey; plague take the gals, there's allers some confounded excuse for things not bein' done when they should be. Come, come—bustle, gals, bustle; where's mother?"

"Here, I am, Jonathan, hard at work," showing her hands through the door, covered with dough.

"Well, well I know it; jist have breakfast about the quickest, will ye? and let Nathan take the white mare. He musn't be behind time the very first goin' off, or he'll have his hands full, I promise you. Con-sarn it all, what's the matter with the boy? this way, Nathan, this way; you don't look well this mornin'; what's the matter with you, my son?"

"A slight cold, I'm a thinkin', father. I didn't sleep well, last night."

"*Didn't sleep well last night!*" mocking him; "don't tell me, I know what's kept ye awake, an' if I hear any more on't, some o' you'll buy the rabbits, or my name ain't Jonathan Hale."

Saying this, the old gentleman shuffled back to the kitchen fire, sat himself down directly before it, with his knees as far apart as they could well stretch, his elbows resting upon them, and his vast hands outspread, so as to intercept all the stray warmth, on its



passage into the room. And there he sat, the excellent old fellow, growling at the girls, wonderin' why the sarsages wasn't ready, why the Indian fire-cake wanted such a plaguy long time to *do*, when every body was in such a hurry, and squirting tobacco juice through his two fore-teeth, said to have been left on purpose, *over* the cake, *under* the frying-pan, *between* the two masses of rock that occupied the place of andirons, and *into* the farthest pile of ashes in sight, with undeviating accuracy, never missing his mark by a hair's breadth, however much he might be interfered with by his wife and daughters, boiling and baking, and roasting and frying in all their varieties on every side of him, or by Watch, the house-dog, trying to find a comfortable place underneath his master's legs, where he might be safe from the hot water, the sparks, and the sputter of the sausage-fat and the frying-pan.

Breakfast over, Nathan leaped to the saddle, and then reaching out his hands to his father, who stood in his stocking feet upon the snow, bidding him to take especial care of himself, he said to him:

"Farewell, father! when you see me again, I hope you will try to look upon me as a full-grown man."

"Hoity, toity, youngster! What's in the wind, now? Wait till you're out of your time, afore you talk about being a man grown, or setting up for yourself."

"I shall, sir. Father, mother, brothers and sisters, an' cousin Rachel, I wish you good-by, all hands of you, and many a happier Thanksgivin' than the last,"



clapping spurs to the old mare, and starting off at a canter as he finished.

“Well,” continued the old gentleman, crawling up the steps, and back into the place he had left before the fire, the only place he ever took a fancy to, when they were cooking, “where’s them are plaguy buskins?” “Well! if that ain’t the most unaccountable boy,” here he squirted a large quantity of spittle through his front teeth, directly into the dog’s face, the dog yelped and ran backward, greatly to the delight of the old gentleman, who never relaxed a muscle, shaking his head, and pawing at his own eyes with every possible manifestation of loathing and abhorrence. “Served you right, what business had ye there, ye good for nothin’ brute? Come, hurraw, there, hurraw! where’s my tother shoe? I had it a minute ago, and now the knife is gone. I say, Josh, I thought I told you to get my saddle-bags out—here, you, Josh.”

“I ain’t deaf, father.”

“Where’s my saddle-bags, eh?”

“Oh, I forgot all about ’em, father.”

“*Oh, I forgot all about ’em, father!*” imitating. “What d’ye mean by that, hey? what business had you to forget ’em, you lazy dog, you? laziest whelp in all Coventry. Didn’t I tell you more ’an a week ago that I must go to Hartford the day arter Thanksgiving? where’s my mittens? Ain’t that ere hoss an’ sleigh ready yet, Josh?”

“What horse and sleigh, father? I haven’t heerd any thing about a horse and sleigh.”

“*Haven’t heard any thing about a horse and*



*sleigh*," imitating. "Didn't hear me tell that are Ebenezer Day, last night, when he wanted me to send for your brother, how't all the horses was engaged, did ye? No, I dare say you didn't; just like ye. Out o' my sight, you whelp."

"Well, father, an' what if I did? How should I know that you'd want a horse and sleigh, this morning, to go to Hartford?"

"You get out, you didn't know 'twas trainin' day over to Hartford, this afternoon, did ye?"

"So 'tis, I swannee! an' they're gwyin' to choose officers."

Here Elder Hale reached forth his arm, and taking the measure of the young man's face, lent him a cuff that sent him staggering across the room, and then, without speaking a word, went on buttoning the knees of his breeches, and strapping his buskins underneath his thick cowhide shoes.

"What was that for?" inquired poor Joshua, looking awful mad, rubbing his ear, and almost ready to cry, partly with rage, and partly with shame.

The father made no reply; but one of the children said afterward, that she saw dad's eye turned up through his large bushy eyebrows, toward a white oak switch that hung over the clock, while he was pretending to be occupied with the straps to his buskins, and so, stealing sliely up to her brother, gave him a pinch.

But Joshua's dander was up now, and he determined to have an answer.

"I say, father, I want to know what you cuffed me for? What have I done, hey?"



“*What have you done, hey?*” imitating. “I’ll tell you what you have done, in about a minute; just wait till I get these plaguey straps fastened, an’ I’ll try to clear up the mystery. Meantime, Joe, you may be getting out the horse and sleigh.”

Josh, aware of what was coming, stood near the open door, ready for a jump, and just as his father straightened himself up, and reached forth his hand toward the white oak switch, for explanation, Josh fetched a spring backward, and vanished through the door.

Whereupon, Elder Hale shook his head at his wife, and then began to laugh a little, in his own quiet and agreeable way.

“Told him enough about swearing, won’t have any thing o’ the sort under my ruff; if he wants to swear, let him go somewhere else. Pretty example to set before the younger children! an’ he the head o’ the family. I wonder if he hopes ever to take my place in the church, arter I’m gone?”

“But, father,” said Joseph, in a timid voice, like one half afraid of being sarved out, if he opened his mouth in the wrong place; “father, I say, was that swearin’?”

“*Was it swearin’?*” imitating. “Why, what else could it be?”

“But the Bible don’t say so, father?”

“That’s all you know about it, my boy. Don’t the Bible say we shall have to answer for every idle word, an’ if swannee ain’t an idle word, I should like to know what it is?”

“Yes, father.”



And so, the horse and sleigh being brought to the door, the rifle, the powder-horn, a large pillow-case, crammed with dough-nuts, a quantity of pork and beans and apple pie in a sugar-box, and a large block of wood heated before the fire, to keep his feet warm, Elder Hale started off.

The moment the sleigh was out of sight, the joy of the whole family broke forth. Such a difference! In fact, you might see their countenances change as the ringing of the sleigh-bells died away, growing brighter and brighter, and happier and happier every moment. Even the good mother, Aunt Nabby herself, who best knew the sterling qualities of her husband, even she appeared like another creature; now that he was out of the way; and at last she was brought to acknowledge that the old man stayed rather too much in the house for the comfort o' the gals, and that cooking over his legs in cold weather, wasn't altogether so convenient as it might be.

"But something must have ryled father, this morning," said Comfort. "I never saw him half so snap-pish afore, every thing went wrong; and if he could a got down cellar, I've no manner o' doubt we should 'a had to pick over all them are winter apples again; or maybe he'd a set us all hands to work slicin' potatoes for the sheep. What ailed him, mother, do you know?"

"Nothin' without's the night mare; he groaned awfully in his sleep, an' I had to wake him two or three times, and then he didn't seem to know where he was."

"The night-mare, mother!" said Eunice, a dear



little, sprightly-looking child, with hazel eyes, and the most beautiful brown hair in the world, "the night-mare, mother! The *white-faced pacer*, more like!"

"*Why, Eunice,*" cried the mother, changing color, and looking up, as if she expected the roof to fall, "are you ravin' distracted? Never mention that dreadful beast again while you live."

"And why not, mother?"

"Child, child, you scare me. Your father has forbid us ever to speak o' horse or rider again, while we breathe, and he has his reasons for it, you may depend."

"Yes, mother, but we can't help *thinking* about 'em both, for all that."

"Think about 'em, if you will, but—come, come to your work, girls. Comfort and Thankful, go to your spinnin'. Eunice, take out Cousin Rachel's baby, and let him see the boys fodder the cattle. Timothy—Mr. Swett, I mean—here, Mr. Swett, will you please to see that Joe cleans out the barn, accordin' to orders."

"Yes'm. My summer wages stopped day before Thanksgivin', but I don't mind havin' a little oversight o' things, till the old man gits back, but I shall want to borry the colt this arternoon, if you'd jest as live's not. Dolly Piper, she's a gittin' rayther home-sick, an' I promised to give her a sleigh-ride, afore she pulled up stakes at the corner."

"You don't say so! Dolly Piper's a nice gal, and you may have the sleigh and welcome, along with the colt."



The arrangements of the day being now completed, every individual of that large family, from the oldest to the youngest, was quietly at work; some shelling corn, the youngest boy holding yarn for the mother to wind, the hired girl, or help, stringing dried apples, two or three knitting, and one reading aloud from a little greasy newspaper that contained an account of the battle of Bunker Hill, then five or six months old.

By seven o'clock in the evening, they began to look for the return of the old man; by half-past seven, to wonder what *could* have detained him, running to the door every two or three minutes, to listen for the bells; and by eight, to feel as if something *must* have happened, for never, since their remembrance, had he failed to be at home early in the evening, when his wife was not with him.

At last they heard the bells; they ran to the door and listened; the sound stopped, and they all stood staring at one another, and wondering, yet afraid to speak. Again the bells were heard—their own bells; they could not be mistaken, but they appeared to come from a different quarter, and again they stopped, just when they seemed coming up to the very door.

“Hark, children, hush! I hear voices. Who is it? Who’s whispering there?”

To this adjuration there was no reply.

“Ah, there he is! there he is! there comes father! I see him now,” cried Eunice, pointing in the direction of the burned grounds.”

“Nonsense, child, that ain’t the way to Hartford.”



"I don't care, mother, but I do see somebody there; jist over there, Joe, by the brush fence—there—there! Don't you see him now, mother?"

"I think I do see somebody movin', but 'tain't father. Goodness me! if 'tain't somebody a horse-back! I hope 'tain't the—"

"Silence there!" cried the father, coming into view that moment round the corner of the house. "What are ye all out o' doors for, at this time o' night? Go to the barn, Josh, and put up the mare; I left her standing by the sugar maple as I came along."

"Goodness me! which way did you come, father?"

Up went the old man's hand, but Josh ducked, and the fingers just missed him.

"Boy, boy, if you don't stop the usin' o' sich words, you shan't stay under my ruff; it's an awful habit, an' I'll either break you of it, or I'll break your neck."

"Father, who was that with you?"

"With me, child? When? where?"

"Just now—not five minutes ago. I saw somebody leave you out there by the sugar maple—somebody on horseback."

"Pho, pho, child; you don't know what you're a talkin' about."

"But I do, though, father."

"Silence, gal! It's time you was abed, and asleep."

Here was another mystery to lie awake for.

But Elder Hale had no idea of going to bed himself. There was evidently something on his mind.



He looked pale and anxious—and after restoring his long rifle to its hooks over the fire-place, and his powder-horn and bullet-pouch to the hanging-shelf overhead, he sat down, and spreading his knees, without loosing the buttons or letting down the stockings, and stretching forth his hands, appeared lost in thought before the great rearing fire; never once looking up, nor squirting the tobacco juice at the end of the back log, or into the hot ashes, for full two minutes, the children looking at him with astonishment, afraid to move; his wife wondering what had happened to make him so thoughtful; and Watch afar off, eyeing him from a far corner, lying flat on his belly, with his two fore-paws stretched forth on each side of his nose; you might see that he was prepared for the worst, and pretty well determined not to be taken by surprise, happen what might in the cogitations of Elder Hale.

“Boys!” muttered the old gentleman at last, drawing a long breath, and letting fly at the end of the forestick which had just burnt off and parted in the middle, throwing up a handful of sparks, and covering the hearth all over with cinders. “Boys, a word in your ear. Gals, go to bed. Wife, bring us a mouthful o’ something to eat, anything on airth ’ill do; a bowl o’ bread an’ milk would suit me best, or apples and milk; I’m as hungry as a wolf; and e’en jist tired to death”—squirt—“but if I go to bed, I shan’t sleep, I’m sure o’ that, and so”—squirt, squirt. “Ah! did you speak, wife?”

“I! no indeed, nobody spoke but yourself.”

“Strange, well, I must have been mistaken, that’s



all, and 'taint the fust time, or perhaps the noise came down chinney, or may I've been a ridin' so long in the wind, my hearin, is none of the best. Didn't you hear bells?"

"No, I heard nothing; did you, boys, any of you?"

"Nothin' at all, mother—hark! I hear the galloping of horses! and one a pacer!"

At this moment there was a sound, as of a horse going at full speed past the window.

The boys started to run to the door; but the old man called after them in a voice of thunder, to stop, and then he sat down, and falling to work upon his bowl of brown bread and milk, and a plateful of roasted apples, in dead silence, occasionally stopping to think, or to go over on his fingers some intricate calculation, and taking no farther notice of them or their mother, nor ever looking up, indeed, till he had finished. Then throwing himself back in his chair, and pushing away the table, he turned abruptly to the boys, and with a voice so altered and with a look so stern, as to set them all a wondering, asked them if any of 'em wouldn't like to enlist?

Nobody answered, but all sat looking into the fire with the greatest intensity.

"Why don't you speak? What the plague's the matter with ye? The war is up. Men are wanted, your country is in danger, and all I want to know is whether any of ye has got enough o' your father's blood in his veins, to shoulder his rifle and take the field in defence of his mother and sisters, or whether, hold your tongue Josh! wait till I'm done, or



whether you'd like to stay where ye are, an' die o' the whoopin' cough, or the small pox, or the itch."

"Father," said the eldest, in a quavering voice, "father, I don't know but I should like to jine the light horse, if you've no objection, and would just lem me take the white-faced colt—he's a pealer!"

"No, Josh, can't afford to give you all a horse a piece; an', between you an' me, I don't think much o' our Connecticut light horse for sich times, there's too many gentlemen among 'em, and they won't be able to bear the rough handling o' the British, but if any of you is for goin' right into the sarvice afoot, and like a man—he'll find no child's play there nyther, I can tell him that—why, the sooner he speaks up the better. What! nobody speak, not one o' my whole family! You'd like to ride, hey, pretty fellers! jest the thing for officers! but couldn't think of goin' afoot? What the plague are ye good for?"

"*Why*, Joshua!" whispered the mother. "*Why*, Joshua, do you know who you was named for?"

Joshua turned away his head, and looked miserably chop-fallen.

"Joshua is determined to go to bed with a whole skin, I see," continued the old man. "But what say you, Joseph?"

"If I ain't too young, father. I was jest a-going to speak, but I felt afeard."

"Too young, my boy? Why, do you know that more'n half them that did the work at Bunker Hill and Lexington, was boys of sixteen, fifteen, fourteen,



and some that I know was only jest turned o' twelve."

"They had their fathers with them, I guess."

"Rayther guess they did, my boy, and you shall have your father with you, if you say so."

"Shall I? Then, here goes, an' the sooner the better—hooray!"

"Mercy on us, Jonathan Hale, are you a-goin crazy?" cried Aunt Nabby.

"No, wife, but I'll tell you what 'tis. I have bin to the minister, I've had a narrow escape, an' what's more, a talk with them that knows, an' I've made up my mind, that next campaign will see me, and as many of our boys as we can spare, tryin' to do our duty side by side with the rest of my countrymen. Go to bed, boys. Come, wife, let's go to bed."



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND.

JUST nine months after this, being the 26th of August, 1776, an aged man appeared at Washington's head-quarters in the city of New York, entreating permission to serve as a volunteer in the approaching battle, then hourly expected on Long Island. He was a man of few words, and Washington appeared very much struck with his grave and thoughtful carriage. He bore a letter to the Commander-in-Chief, written by Governor Trumbull, of Connecticut, asking as a favor, if it might be allowed, consistently with the rules of the service, that the aged man, who would take with him into camp a son just turned of eighteen, might be allowed to join the sharp-shooters, and, as far as possible, to "*fight on his own hook.*" Washington smiled at the language of the request, but there was no time for consideration; and having directed the father and son to report themselves to Colonel Miles, whose battalion of riflemen were already posted in a thick wood, to watch a road running from the southern side of the hills of Jamaica, he dismissed them.

They had already crossed the East River, and were on the way to report themselves, when a boat passed them swiftly, and striking a little below where they



Land landed, a man leaped ashore, followed by a horse without saddle or bridle.

"There goes the white-faced pacer, as large as life!" cried the father.

"An' there goes Ebenezer Day himself!" cried the son.

"I hope not. I shouldn't like to meet that man here, and jest on the eve o' battle. He's out for no good, I'm sure; and though I've got a plenty o' questions to put to him when we do meet, still, as I said afore, I should a leetle rather not see him jest now."

"And why not, father?"

"Why, Joe, because I don't want a private quarrel on my hands, jest at a time when all the grit that's in me is wanted for a better cause."

"Who goes there?" cried a sentry, starting up from a log on which he had been sitting.

"A friend!"

"Advance, friend, an' give the countersign!"

"What's that, father? What's the critter mean?"

"I don't know, but I'm rayther inclined to—"

"Stand!" shouted the sentry, leveling his musket at the old man's head.

"Not as you knows on," cried Joe. "Better mind what you're at, mister; two can play at that game; father's a dead shot with a rifle, and as for me—"

Bang! Off went the sentinel's piece, another followed, another, and another, and forth rushed the Corporal's guard, followed by the grand rounds.

"There, father, wha' did I tell ye?"



"A miss is as good as a mile," answered his father. "And as for that are feller, he's more'n half asleep now. So much for settin' on his post. Here, you, mister," calling to the sentry, as the Corporal's guard began to close upon them; "plaguy pretty business you'd a made on't, wouldn't ye now, if we *had* bin the inimy?"

"Silence! Who are you?" said the Corporal, with a flourish.

"Silence! Who are ye? If that ain't a good one, father!"

"Hold your tongue, Joe, the man knows what he's about," continued the father; and then, having explained the whole matter, he and Joe were sent off under an escort to Colonel Miles, and the sentry was clapped under arrest, for having disregarded the general orders which had just appeared, cautioning the men against the dangerous practice of sitting on their posts, *at night*, and in the presence of an enemy, whose attack was hourly expected.

"Excellent!" cried Colonel Miles, on hearing the old man's proposition. "You are just the men we want. Is your boy a good shot?"

"Rayther more'n middlin'," said the father; "nothin' to brag of, though, but willin' to do his best."

"That'll do—that's enough. But these clothes o' yourn won't do."

"Why not? Arn't they good enough?"

"Too good, by half, and a great deal too warm, let me tell you, for such weather as we're likely to have. Here Pope—Sergeant Pope—this way, if you



please, Mr. Pope. Just bring us in a couple o' hunting-shirts. There, my friend, these are the things for service," he added, as the hunting-shirts appeared. "You see what the Commander-in-Chief's notions are: cheaper, cooler in summer and warmer in winter, and calculated to strike terror into the enemy, who take it for granted that all who wear this kind o' dress are capital marksmen. There's another thing to be considered: a citizen's dress would expose you to a good deal of risk, if you should happen to be taken prisoner with arms upon you."

"Very well, sir, we're agreed; but what's to become o' the clothes we take off? They ain't more'n a quarter worn out, an' Joe's won't come to mendin' these three months.

The Colonel bit his lip, and then, after a brief pause, replied:

"Leave them here; I'll be answerable for them."

"Well, father, I don't see but that's a fair shake enough," said Joe; "an' now, the sooner we get rigged up the better;" looking rather pale and anxious, and then stopping short, as he heard a distant dropping fire, like that of riflemen afar off, then a bugle, and then the booming of cannon, the first poor Joseph had ever heard in his life. "Goodness, father, what's that?" he added, catching at his father's arm, and turning his head in the direction of the sound.

But the old man was made for such occasions.

"*That*, my boy," said he, stretching forth his right arm, and following the reverberations with his hand, as they rumbled and echoed among the hills that reach from the eastern side of the Narrows, a dis-



tance of six miles, up to Jamaica, "that, my boy, is the voice of our country! 'Lo, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!'"

"Glorious!" cried the Colonel. "And now just step aside, change your dresses, and return to me as soon as possible, and then"—catching the old man's quiet enthusiasm—"then we'll try to find a place for you, where you will be able to fight *on your own hook*. One thing, however, I must mention to you now, or it may be forgotten. We are expecting an attack every hour—every moment, indeed."

Poor Joseph's heart was in his mouth.

"We are all ready for it, full of courage, and full of confidence."

Poor Joseph began to feel better.

"There are but three passes through the hills, very narrow and easily defended. We are in command of them all, and I am posted here, with my sharpshooters, to keep open the communication. Everything will depend upon our not being taken by surprise. Every man must be on the watch, and, as for you, as I mean to leave you a pretty wide field for operation, all I ask of you is, that you will mind the bugle, and when you see the others moving off, you must be sure to follow. There may be no time for explanations, and I shouldn't like to have you cut off."

"*Cut off!*" said Joseph, and his teeth began to chatter.

"*Movin' off*, Colonel, I don't know as I understand you; I hope you don't mean runnin' away?" said the old man.



The Colonel laughed, "Yes, but I do, though," said he. "Riflemen carry no bayonets."

"Nor anybody else, for that matter, so far as I could see," replied the farmer.

"Very true, we're sadly deficient in every thing but pluck and a deep religious confidence in the God of battles. In a word, riflemen must run, if they are charged."

"But they may run as they like, I hope, and when they're out of breath, I s'pose there'd be no great harm in just steppin' behind a tree, or a fence, long enough to drop a ball in, hey, Colonel?"

"Not the least in the world."

"That'll do, that's enough," cried the old man; "we'll be back in a minnit;" and running into the bushes, followed by his son, they stripped immediately, and soon reappeared, equipped in their hunting shirts and all ready for the onset, poor Joseph with many a sad misgiving, and many a sorrowful thought of home, the father with none at all, for he had "counted the cost," and going to battle with him now, was like going to Church.

They were immediately put in charge of an orderly, furnished with knapsacks and canteens; attached to a mess that fed any where and every where, by night or by day, on the march, or among the bushes and tree-tops, carrying their provender ready cooked, in the shape of dough-nuts, brown bread and fat pork, and were ordered to lie down and sleep upon their arms.

"You'll call us when we're wanted, mister, shan't ye?" asked Joe, wiping his eyes with the sleeve of



his hunting shirt, and then, seeing that he was observed, letting the sleeve slip down over his mouth, as if that were the real object he had in view.

“Rather guess we shall, youngster.”

“I’m plaguey tired, hard to wake at all times,” continued Joe, “should be sorry to oversleep myself jest at this time.”

“Oversleep yourself! zounds! my man, if you *should* happen to oversleep yourself here, when you’re wanted, you’d better never wake again.”

“I don’t know about that,” said the father, “Joe haint signed the papers yet, and law’s law, I s’pose, till that’s gone through with.”

“Haven’t signed the papers! What business have you here, then?”

“As much business here as you have, my friend. If you think otherwise, you’d better stop over there, and ask General Washington if we haint, that’s all.”

“Pshaw! there’s your quarters,” pointing to a ragged and miserable tent, already occupied, by half a score of sleepers with hunting shirts and dark rusty-looking rifles—make yourself as comfortable as you can, and to-morrow, if we’re both living, we’ll have another talk about the papers, there’s no time to-night.”

“To-morrow, *if we’re both living*,” repeated Joe, gasping for breath. “Why, father! how the feller talks!”

“Joseph, my dear son, we know not who may be alive to-morrow. You and I may be in our graves”—

“Father! father! don’t talk so; you make me feel strange.”



“My dear boy, I want you to feel strange; come here, kneel down with me, and let us pray together,” and down they knelt upon the damp turf and prayed together, each holding by the other’s hand, the boy with streaming eyes lifted up to heaven, the father, with a countenance brimful of solemnity and fervor.

“Oh, that our Nathan was here!” the father added, as he rose to his feet—

“Well, father, it’s my opinion you’ll find him here, somewhere. You know he threatened to go into the army after he got through the school, and I’ve always had a sort of a notion—who’s that! Look, father, look! There goes a man like a shadow, with a horse following arter him jest like a dog. Father, father! don’t you see ’em?”

“See them! to be sure I do—hark, hark! They are both coming this way. Ah! Ebenezer! is that you?”

“Jonathan Hale, as I’m alive! the very man I’ve been a lookin’ for these three days. Have you seen your son?”

“My son is with me.”

“What, the Captain?”

“The Captain! I don’t understand you. Joseph is here. Joshua I’ve left at home to take charge of the house and look after his mother, and as for Nathan—perhaps you can tell me where he is to be found.

“Perhaps I can; but why do you think so.”

“Why? Because—man or devil—Ebenezer Day, you had that power over Nathan Hale from the first time you ever set eyes on him, that no other human



being ever had, or ever will have. From the day he left my house, the next morning after you rode away so unaccountably, he was never the same person. The next time I saw him, he was moody and thoughtful, and his own mother hardly knew him."

"Excellent! Have you forgotten the Bible and key, or the conversation you and I had together, and the little service I did you at the training at Hartford, nine months ago this very day."

"Oh, gracious, what is it?" cried Joseph, starting back, and stretching forth all the fingers he had, toward some object behind his father. It was a horse's head thrust forward, between the stranger and his father, as if listening, and within a foot of their faces.

The old man was a good deal startled at the look of the animal's eyes; but much more at the allusion made by the stranger to the training at Hartford, where a person had scraped acquaintance with him, and, as with the hand of a giant, stopped a large, powerful horse, that had nearly overthrown him, just as he was getting into his sleigh, to return home. That person, too, had actually parted with him under the maple tree, after rousing his old heart for the wrongs of his country, as with the voice of a trumpet.

"Ebenezer Day, was that you?"

"It was."

"Why, that appeared a middle-aged man, almost in the flower of his strength."

"Well, and what am I, pray?"

"*You!*"



“Yes, I! But enough o’ this. Look you, Jonathan Hale, I have no time for trifling now—your boy, Nathan, is a Captain in the Continental Army. Would you like to see him—perhaps for the last time—before we join battle? If so, follow me.”

“Lead on—we’ll follow.”

“But, I say, father, is that right? Ain’t we under orders?”

“No, boy; no further than we choose, fighting, as we do, on our own hook. *After* to-morrow, it may be a different thing—”

“I wish to-morrow would come, father.”

“What’s that, boy?”

“You mean to list, then, father?”

“To be sure I do, if there’s any thing left of me.”

“That’s right, father—hurraw for you.”

“Maybe you’d like to ride; here, Betty, here!” continued Ebenezer Day.

“No, I thank ye,” answered the old man, as the playful beast came trotting round them in a circle, snuffing and throwing up her heels, and poking her nose out and offering, now her left side and then her crupper to them. “No, I thank ye—I’d a leetle rayther walk, if it’s all the same to you.”

“Well, Joe, won’t you jump on? You’ll find her about the easiest goin’ critter ever you backed in your life; here, Betty!”

“I!” said Joe, dropping a little behind his father; “*not by a jug full!*”

“Hadn’t ye better?”

And up came the mare, as if she understood her master, and, flirting her tail in the boy’s face,



stretched forth her long neck, and lifted her thick mane, giving a sort of low, whimpering neigh, which was immediately answered from an open field on their left.

Joe drew nearer to the old man, and, fixing his eye on the mare, as much as to say "no you don't; I'm up to all your tricks, marm," he gave his father a tug at the elbow, which the old man replied to by dropping the breech of his gun into his hard, rattling palm, and then asking:

"How far's it to our Nathan's?"

"Not far; wait a minute," said the stranger; and he disappeared in the darkness, followed by the mare.

After a few minutes, voices were heard approaching, the trampling of horses' feet, and before the old man had entirely recovered from the surprise he had felt on seeing the mare take the fence with a flying leap, at the heels of her master, a horseman rode up to him, flung himself from the saddle, and cried out: "Thank God, father, I've found you at last, and who is that with you?"

For a moment, the old man was utterly overcome. There stood his brave boy, the pride of his old age, with the stout bearing of a youthful soldier, wearing the badge of authority, a yellow cockade, and evidently a personage of no little consequence, for he was followed by five or six horsemen, who held themselves aloof during the interview with his father.

The old man dropped his rifle and took his boy by both hands without speaking, and before he had entirely mastered the feeling that rose in his throat, and almost choked him, the question was repeated.



“Why brother, don’t you know me?”

“God bless me Joe! is that you—where’s Josh?”

The old man dropped the hands he held, and stepping back, raised his right arm, as with no very equivocal intention. But somebody at his back interfered.

“Old gentleman! are you out o’ your head?”

“Out o’ my head—no!”

“Who are you? let go my arm; or—” lifting it and breaking away with more than the usual energy of a father about to deal with a disobedient son after the fashion of that day.

“Would you strike an officer, old gentleman? Do you know the consequences?”

“*Do I know the consequences?*” imitating. “No! nor do I care for the consequences; ain’t I his father? and do you think I’ll stand by and hear him take the name of the Lord in vain—no! not if he was the Commander-in-Chief.” And then turning to his son, who had been familiar from his youth up with a certain dexterous flirt of the fingers which had set their cheeks a tingling times without number, he added: “I tell you what it is, Nathan Hale, I can forgive you for most any thing—for every thing but this.”

“Father, forgive me,” said the Captain, “I was wrong; forgive me, I beseech you, I’ll be more upon my guard hereafter; and now, you must be very tired, sir, mount my horse, will you, and just follow that man—Corporal Webber, this way—here sir—now, father, jump up, and he will show you to our rendezvous. It is not half a mile from here, and I’ll be with you in half an hour, at furthest.”



“Very well, I forgive you this time, but mind,” shaking his rifle over his head, “Captain or no Captain, I won’t have any swearin’ where I am. Here, Joe, jump up behind, carry double, won’t he?”

“Yes, if you can get him up.”

“Get him up; what d’ye mean by that? Here, Joe.”

“Feel behind, father, and judge for yourself.”

“The old man did so, and greatly to his astonishment, found a huge bundle strapped on behind.

“Ah, what’s the meanin’ o’ this, no room here, Joe, without you give a run, and clap your hands on the crittur’s rump, and spring high enough to clear a bundle about the size of our little Jerry, a standin’ up.”

“Better let him walk, father.”

The old man assented, and Nathan followed slowly after, getting all the news he could from his brother, and giving him directions about his conduct in battle, where to betake himself at the bugle call, what to do in case of a charge or a retreat, and, above all, imploring him to stand by his father, and acquit himself like a man. “Brother!” he added, after a long and thoughtful pause, just as they were challenged by a sentry of the outpost, to which he was attached,

“Brother! you must be well prepared. If the battle comes on, and come it will, within a few days, just as sure as we are living men, we must make up our minds to beat the enemy. What people did at Bunker Hill and Lexington last year, and what they have just done at Sullivan’s Island, is enough to show what we are capable of. One word more. We



must soon be separated, God knows for how long a time."

"Don't, brother—don't talk so. I can't bear it."

"I did not say it irreverently, Joseph, but He only knows whether we shall ever meet again. Try to get some sleep, urge father to sleep, and if the worst comes to the worst, you will find me *undiscouraged*. Farewell! I have duties to perform, I may not be able to see father again, but I leave him in your charge. Farewell!"

And here they parted, Captain Hale to take his rounds about two miles in the rear of the battalion of riflemen, his young brother to sleep, and his aged father to prayer.

But sleep would not follow prayer. The strange circumstances in which that father found himself, so far from his beloved and peaceful home, surrounded by all the signs and preparations for immediate battle—strangers all about, lying asleep in their clothes on the damp turf, and grasping each his fire-lock, in the deep stillness of night, the tread of the sentry echoing with the regular beat of a pulse in the solid earth—no, no, it was impossible to sleep. The thoughts of home, of the slumbering youth he had brought up, even as Abraham had brought Isaac, to be laid upon the altar of his country, peradventure, *not* to be redeemed when the hour of sacrifice drew nigh, all these things were too much for him; and for a moment—a single moment—one might have detected a change in his breathing, or perhaps a glistening of the gray lashes. Unable to sleep, he determined to walk forth into the open air, and,



grasping his rifle, he got up and was stealing forth on tip-toe, when Joseph woke, and starting to his feet, appeared bewildered for a moment, and altogether lost; but a sign from his father reassured him, and taking his rifle, when he saw his father stoop and pass out of the tent, he followed hard after him.

The air was cool and fresh. No living creature was astir. It was very dark, so dark that the sentry could hardly be distinguished at the distance of ten or a dozen yards, as they stole by him, and the stillness had something awful in it.

Having pursued their way together for a considerable time, until the tread of the nearest sentry was lost in the distance, and nothing was to be heard but the occasional passing of a mounted patrol in some by-path, or a vidette hurrying at full speed over the Jamaica road, they seated themselves under a tree, and fell into conversation. For the first time in all his life, the father spoke to the son, as to an equal, and for the first time in all his life, poor Joseph was not afraid to be alone with his father. Instead of reviewing all the past errors and follies, the backslidings and shortcomings of Joshua and Nathan, and all the rest of the family, and reproaching them for the cost he had been put to, and for the trouble he had gone through with in bringing them up, he talked with his boy as if his heart were softened at the near approach of danger, perhaps of death, and even went so far as to acknowledge that he had always been a most indulgent father too indulgent, perhaps, and that Joseph had been a very good sort



of a boy after all; and he had never, so far as he knew, deserved a switchin' that he didn't get; and that, he added, "was sayin' a good deal for any body."

Joe was a good deal affected by this; but just as he was on the point of assuring his father how deeply he felt his kindness, better late than never, the old man rose up, listened, then made a sign to him not to more, laid his ear to the ground, continued in that position for several minutes, and then straining his eyes toward the nearest hills, he pointed to Joe's rifle, and grasping his own, made another sign to the boy to follow him.

Joe was not a little alarmed; and he had not followed his father a hundred yards through the low underbrush, when all at once he felt the ground trembling under him, as if at regular intervals there was a heavy tread passing by them in the darkness.

"They are on the march," whispered his father, and we must follow. I don't understand it—I declare. It can't be the battalion of riflemen, they are two miles further off, and surely they'd never think of retreating in this way, and leaving the pass open. Boy, we must follow them; there's something here I don't like."

"What time o' night is't, father?"

"Can't see by my watch, but"—looking up at the sky—"it must be near day-light, I'm a thinkin'. Steady; look to your bullet-pouch."

"All right, father."

"And the powder-horn?"

"Yes, father."

"Very well; now" in a low, anxious whisper.



“Just open your pan, softly—hark!—very softly, Joe, and see if the primin’s all right.”

“All right, father.”

“Very well—now follow me like a panther. Do whatever you see me do; when I stop, do you stop.”

“Yes, father; but how am I to see what you are doin’? It’s jest as dark as Egypt here, and if you push on ahead as fast as you have, all I can do is to foller ye.”

“Well, then, follow me, and don’t make any more noise than you can help.”

After a few minutes they came to the roadside, where they concealed themselves among the undergrowth. Hardly were they there, when the old man dropped upon one knee, and, resting his long rifle upon the top of a stump, laid his cheek to the breech, as if on the point of pulling trigger, for lo! there was a dark, heavy, moving mass right before them, within a distance of fifty yards, hoarse whispering, the rattle of arms, carried carefully, and the trampling of many horses. For ten minutes the black mass continued rolling by them, occasionally coming nearer—so near at one time that his father touched him, to make him lie down flat upon his face.

While they were both in this position, watching with intense and terrible anxiety, a horseman drew up within a dozen yards of them—it had grown lighter now—and the outline of horse and rider both could be distinguished. Another rode up—a word or two was interchanged in a low voice not in a whisper, as hitherto—and something was said about scouring the woods along that whole route.



“No, no! we’re safe now; we’ve outwitted the d—d rebels at last!” cried the latter, wheeling as he spoke. “My service to General Grant, and tell him I have rejoined De Heister,” and then clapping spurs to his horse, and pointing toward Flatbush, he started off at a hard gallop, followed by five or six other well-mounted horsemen.

“The Lord have mercy upon the poor critter’s soul!” whispered the old man, in a voice that Joseph remembered to his dying day. Then followed the crack of a rifle, and the next moment the officer tumbled from the saddle, and away went the horse, plunging and tearing toward the nearest wood.

“Halt!” shouted a loud voice, “halt!”—other voices followed. “Skirmishers to the flanks! give them a volley, and charge. Ah, there goes the General! Now for it—hurrah!”

Forward came a general officer, followed by a number of horsemen, at full speed. A short conversation ensued; the men were ordered to halt and form—the right flankers were called in, the country being all open on that side—the left thrown out, and preparations were made for scouring the wood.

“It was but one shot, and very near—just on the edge of the wood, sir,” continued the speaker.

“It matters not; there may be a body of riflemen there. It looks well adapted for ambush, and we must be wary. Look to it, sir; we cannot afford to skirmish with the main body. Throw in a few sharpshooters, and feel them a little before we charge.”

“During all this conversation—every word of which fell on the ears of the father and son like a



sentence of death—the old man stood stooping and holding his son's hand, that he shouldn't move. But now, making a sign to him to follow, he crept a few paces off, and got behind a large tree.

That instant, a volley was poured into the underbrush, and they were both able to see, in the sudden brightness of the discharge, the horseman, pointing with his sword at the very spot they had just left.

“Joseph, my boy, that other rifle.”

Joseph reached it to him.

“And now, Joseph, take mine, and pull foot. I'll be after ye in a moment.”

Joseph shook his head.

“Do as I bid you, boy.”

Joseph obeyed, keeping his eye on his father, who continued with his rifle rested, and pointing toward the officer, as if waiting for a chance.

At last it came. Another sharp crack was heard, the officer bent over the saddle, as if shot through the body; a terrible commotion followed, orders from twenty different voices; two or three vollies in quick succession, and then all was still again.

“So, there's another gone to De Heister! That makes two!” said the old man, overtaking his son, who was all out of breath; and beginning to load anew, “no time to lose, my boy—load away, load away! they can't hear us, and if they do, they're only throwing away their powder and ball, we're safe now, and the alarm will spread. We have cost them a good half hour and two officers.

“Two, father, and how do you feel after killing two men?”



“How do I feel! go ask Judas Macabeas, or Joshua, or any other of the mighty men of old, who went forth against the Philistines, how they felt! Ah! there it comes!”

At this moment a heavy cannonade was opened by De Heister upon Flatbush, and General Clinton, whose troops had now gained the American left unperceived, having halted and refreshed his men—charged the Americans with his dragoons and infantry just as they had abandoned the hills and were flying to their lines.

Hotter and hotter raged the battle. Heavier and heavier grew the cannonade. For six mortal hours the troops under Lord Stirling, composed of Colonel Atlees, Colonel Smallwood's, and Colonel Hatch's regiments, with two battalions under Colonel Miles, were engaged with the whole British left under General Grant.

Driven by the British upon the Hessians, and by the Hessians upon the British, over and over again, the Continentals grew desperate, and concentrating for one final effort, charged in their turn, and bursting their way through the clouds of triumphant British, cut their way back to their camp. The British losing only three hundred and eighteen, of whom but sixty-one were killed, while the loss of the Continentals could not have been less than a thousand, many perishing miserably in the marsh at Gowan's cove, and others in the woods, while no less than ten hundred and eleven privates and non-commissioned officers together with two Major Generals (General Sullivan and Lord Stirling,) and sixty-two



commissioned officers were taken prisoners by the British.

And yet our people were undiscouraged. They would listen to no terms of accommodation from their task-masters. They knew the cause of their failure. They had fought under tremendous disadvantages—raw militia in the open field, against a much greater number of the best disciplined troops in the world. They had been surprised by a strange combination of accidents unheard of in the wars of Europe, and were prevented from betaking themselves to their entrenchments, where they hoped to be assailed, and where the story of Bunker Hill would have been told over again, with variations—by a large body of troops getting in their rear.

“Father! father! jest look o’ there!” cried Joseph, in the very midst of the fight, “look! look! there goes the white-faced pacer, jest as sure as you’r alive!” And there she was going, sure enough! and there went her rider, without saddle or bridle, cutting and slashing right and left, bareheaded and apparently heedless of every thing in his way. There, several times, did he appear and disappear, and always in the thickest of the fight, now afoot with the mare following him like a dog, and now on her back, with her mane flying loose, and her eyes flashing fire, at every plunge.

“Awful! ain’t it, father, who can it be?”

“Who can it be? why, Ebenezer Day, to be sure—stand back, mister! look out, Joe!” saying which, the old man fired his rifle at the foremost of a platoon, which came on hurraing and all out of breath,



calling upon them to surrender—and then instantly clubbing it, went at them, followed by Joe, hammer and tongs.

“No quarter! down with them! no quarter! for blasted rebels!” shouted two or three who were in better wind than their fellows, “no quarter!”

“Give it to ’em Joe! Blaze away, old gentleman! that’s your sort!” cried a well-known voice, and instantly the white-faced pacer was among them, scattering them right and left like a whirlwind.

“Run, run for your lives!” cried Ebenezer Day; follow that crowd you see yonder; they are pushing for the lines—that’s your only chance. Run, Joe, run!”

“Run, father, run!” cried Joe.”

“I can’t run, Joe, but you may; run for your life, and when you see your mother, tell her where you left me—as for me, Joe, I am too old to run; farewell, my boy, the God of battles bless and protect thee and her, and all the rest o’ the”—and down he dropped upon the turf.

“Father! father! you’re bleedin’ to death. What’s the matter? Don’t look so, *father*,” cried Joe.

“Bleeding! Oh, ho, that’s another matter,” said Ebenezer Day, jumping off the mare. “Lend us a hand, Joe. Here, Betty, here; stand still a moment, that’s a good critter.”

“What, you ain’t a goin’ to boost father on top o’ that beast!” cried Joe, drawing back with eyes full of horror and amazement.

“Why not? She’ll take him out of danger in three minutes!”



“Father, father, look up!” The old man opened his eyes. “Here’s the white-faced pacer, an’ if you ain’t afeard to git up, I’ll take an’ lead her by the halter.”

“Ebenezer, give me your hand. I’ve seen you at work to-day, like a mower in the field o’ death—I’ll trust you. Help me up, and the Lord bless you for your timely aid.”

“Boost away, Joe, that’s your sort, my boy; there he goes! Now, take the halter, and follow that cloud o’ dust you see there, keepin’ out o’ the way o’ stragglers, and, above all, of the light-horsemen. Good-by.”

“I’ve got her by the halter, father; don’t be afeerd.”

“Hang on, Joe, hang on! If she gets a goin’ that way there’ll be no stoppin’ her. What’s the matter with your left arm, Joe?”

“Nothin’, father.

“*Nothin’, father*; don’t tell me!” reeling backward as he spoke, and trying to steady himself under the swift, easy pace of the mare; “what’s the matter with your arm, I say?”

“Well, father, I don’t know, I declare. It feels, kind o’ numb; and when I wanted to shoulder my rifle a few minutes ago, I found it wouldn’t move; there seems to be a kink in the shoulder.”

“My poor boy, you are wounded! Here, give me the halter, and do you lay hold o’ the critter’s tail, and arter we get a little further along, I’ll jump off an’ swap places with you—ride an’ tie is fair play all the world over—hand me up that are rifle; and now gimme yourn.”



By this arrangement, with great perseverance, and great good luck too, they both got safe back to camp in season to be forwarded by Captain Hale himself, among the first boats that crossed the river with the wounded. The meeting was short and painful; the poor boy had received a bullet in the shoulder, and the old man two or three flesh wounds, not worth mentioning, and one really serious bayonet thrust near the groin, which took on a rather alarming appearance, and obliged him to give up soldiering for one while, and betake himself to his own fireside as fast as he could bear to be moved. Once there, every thing seemed to prosper with him. Joe was the favorite now, and the father himself was an altered man. His heart was full of quiet thankfulness, and he began to have serious thoughts of giving Joe his freedom. Yet more: he began to be satisfied with the chimney corner, and no longer insisted on taking his half of the fire right out of the middle—nay, his fingers appeared to have lost that peculiar flirt which, for half a century, had kept the whole neighborhood in awe—and his voice had altered.



## CHAPTER V.

## EBENEZER DAY.

To say that Washington lost hope or heart after this terrible disappointment would not be true; because if ever a miracle was wrought by the God of Jacob—the Lord of Hosts—for the help of man, it was after the battle of Brooklyn Heights, when the Commander-in-Chief heard the sounds of preparation for storming his works, and felt assured, greatly as he had desired such a trial of strength before the bloody issue had been reached, that if he could not withdraw his forces without losing an hour, the game was up, and the cause of his country lost, for a season, if not forever. But how could he withdraw his troops, and how save his artillery and stores? Between him and the city was a river a mile wide. He had no large boats, and no ships of war, while the enemy had a large fleet, and could sail round the whole island at pleasure. And then, too, the British were so near his works that all night long the clink of hammers closing rivets up were heard by our pickets and sentries. But Washington was not a man to be discouraged. He trusted in the God of our fathers, and, lo! the answer! The strong wind abated, the heavy fog settled along the shore, as if to conceal his operations, and they were able to load



the boats down to the very gunwales; and when they put off, without losing a gun or leaving a man behind, the fog went over with them, and settled down like the smoke of a furnace on the other side, so that when the escape of Washington was first perceived, it was already too late for opening fire—the last boat was just entering the white fog.

And therefore it was that George Washington was not wholly disheartened by the disastrous result of his late battle; fought though it was on the ground himself had chosen, and according to the settled purpose he had in view, when he threw himself upon Long Island, rather than give up New York to the enemy for winter quarters. Better lose a battle than flee before the insolent pretensions of our adversary. To withdraw, without giving battle, would be so utterly discouraging to the people, who had grown headstrong and presumptuous from the results at Lexington and Bunker Hill, and the enemies of our own household, the Tories in our midst, might become unmanageable.

But George Washington was only a man, after all—a great and good man, of tried strength and sincerity; and a man, it may be hoped, after God's own heart. And therefore it was, that before the next trial, he, for once, gave way. All these are facts, young man.

Before the question was settled as to the evacuation and firing of New York—of which a word or two hereafter—news came that the enemy had landed at Kipp's Bay, about three miles above the city. And fast upon the heels of the first messenger, came



another, to say that our troops had abandoned their works, which, though hastily thrown up, were capable of being maintained till reinforcements should arrive.

Two brigades were instantly ordered out, and Washington put himself at their head, trusting to reassure them by his own direct personal efforts. Alas, for the effect of disaster on brave men; he met the whole body of troops which had been stationed for the defense of the works in tumultuous flight, offering no resistance, not even firing a gun. Carried away by the fierceness of his indignation, and to all appearance utterly discouraged and desperate, he plunged the rowels into his charger, and rode at full speed upon the enemy. Nay, more; that man, George Washington, so imperturbable, so grand in his ordinary self-possession, actually rode among the fugitives, cutting right and left with his saber, and firing his pistols at them as they hurried past, and might have been taken prisoner, in spite of his family officers, but for the apparition of a large, powerful man, who swept by him like a whirlwind, bareheaded, with his gray hair flying in the wind, and shouting like a trumpet, and at last heading him off, just as he himself had interchanged a cut with a British officer, and received a platoon volley, which brought the strange-looking, white-faced creature he rode to her knees, and when she recovered, sent him off in a cloud of dust, with his gray head bent low, and his feet shaking in the stirrups.

But Washington and his men were saved, and the British were checked. A moment before, and "it



was as when a standard-bearer fainteth ;” but now—now—the very men who had ran away so shamefully were straining, like hounds upon the leash, to retrieve their characters, and show to their beloved General that he had no reason for discouragement.

Early the next morning—so early that the heavy dew lay like rain upon the meadow-grass, and the river-mist hung like a white fog, immovable and boundless, along the intervals and lowlands for many a mile beyond the city—a young woman, who had risen early to fetch water from the spring, came suddenly and without notice upon a man lying asleep or dead upon the margin, with a horse of singular spirit and shape standing over him, shaking her mane, occasionally stamping with impatience, and trembling all over. The creature had been dreadfully over-driven, that was clear enough at a glance, and there were clots of blood upon the fetlocks and heaving flanks ; and, on going nearer, to speak to the aged warrior, who lay there speechless and motionless, bareheaded and alone, booted and spurred, with a sword half drawn from the scabbard, “the gray hair steekin’ to the haft,” the frightened girl gasped for breath, and then tried to scream for help ; but all in vain. She had lost her voice, and no sound escaped from her parted lips. But Judith May was a child of the Revolution, and so she pressed both hands upon her swelling heart, looked up, and was instantly prepared for the worst.

Hurrying to the stranger, she lifted his head, withdrew the tangled gray hair from the grand, old-fashioned face, and called upon him to awake. And then



shouting for help—"help, oh, help!"—the horse giving way to her, and standing a little distance off, with drooping head and swaying mane, as if she not only felt but understood the kindness of Judith May.

Her cry reached the farm-house, and the next minute, her father and two or three more of the family came running to the spot.

"Look, father—look at this poor man, and say whether he is living or dead. He seems to me, like that poor horse yonder, to be bleeding to death;" and she rose, faint and shuddering, for the white apron she wore was "red with the sign of despair."

The father knelt by the side of the stranger, and lifted his head, while Judith sprinkled water in his face, and bathed his temples.

At last he stirred, then drew a long breath, and the horse came nearer, and as the old man slowly opened his eyes, and looked about him, the horse neighed with such an alarming suddenness, that all sprang to their feet, and, as she shook her clotted mane, found themselves besprinkled with the baptism of the battle-field, if not of death.

But the stranger had only fainted; and after resting a few moments on his elbow, was evidently coming to, for he snatched at the hilt of his half-drawn saber, like Charles XII, after the shot struck him, and tried to lift himself up.

"Not so fast, my good friend," said Squire May; "not so fast, if you please. Let me help you to your feet, if you have made up your mind to have your own way, and I think you have. You may just go



with us—there, there, don't hurry yourself—and we'll see what can be done for you."

"And who are you, pray?"

"I am Josiah P. May, at your service, a magistrate and a farmer. Maybe you've heard tell o' me or my father, old Squire Gideon May?"

"Even so—the sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"

And saying this, the stranger stood up, and shaking them all off, turned upon the bashful young woman, who stood near, watching the expression of his countenance with a look of amazement and awe, and growing very pale, paler and paler at every breath, as she saw the white-faced horse go bounding and plunging in a circle about them, and flinging up her heels within a foot of the stranger's head, and always without appearing to give him the least possible concern:

"And you," continued the stranger, "you are the daughter of this old gentleman, hey?"

Judith blushed and curtsied.

"Well, well"—catching at the top rail of a fence that ran hard by the spring, all overgrown with blackberry bushes and wild roses—"well, well, Judith—"

Judith started and colored.

"It's nothing to be ashamed of, let me tell you. I know something of your father, and"—lowering his voice to a whisper—"and something of you, too, poor child! But I am so weak and helpless that I—that I—if you would be so obliging, neighbor May, as to help me along to your house, and allow me to put up with you a night or two, I think it may be of



no disadvantage to you or your daughter ;” and as he looked at her again his eyes filled.

“To be sure !” said Mr. May. “I guess we’ll manage to put up with you, if you can put up with us—haw ! haw ! Come, now, heave away there, my lads, heave away, and we’ll see what can be done. You look after the horse, Jerry, and you just lean on me and Judith, stranger.”

“Goodness, father, just look at the creature ! Why, as I live, I should think it was the white-faced pacer herself.”

The stranger smiled and the father said : “*Pish !*”

“But, father,” continued Judith, “I really do mean what I say. Just look at her.”

“Well, I declare, she’s the beatenest critter ever I did see,” added Jerry, the hired man. “How she did go over them ar blackberry bushes and that ar five-rail fence !”

The father looked thoughtful.

“What may I call your name ?” said he, to the stranger.

“Ebenezer Day.”

“Ebenezer Day ! And that—allow me to ask you, sir, if that horse yonder is what they call the white-faced pacer ?”

“Even so, squire.”

The father looked at Judith, and Judith looked at Jeremiah, who let go the bridle he had just seized, as if he had burned his fingers, and the horse broke away, with a loud snorting scream, which the poor girl declared, after it was all over, made her very blood run cold.



The stranger grew suddenly pale and faint, and staggered away, as if just ready to pitch head foremost into the spring. Whereat, Squire May made a sign for them to stop all further questioning, and they lost no time in getting the stranger into the house, where they ministered to him, notwithstanding their vague mysterious apprehensions, with every possible kindness, and very much as if they believed they were entertaining angels unawares; and waited on him, and washed the bruises and hurts he seemed to be covered with, as if

“in the last battle  
Borne down by the flying,”

he had been well-nigh trampled to death, instead of being hewn to pieces, like Agag before Samuel, or shot into ribbons. And the mare, too, when she found her master safe, she thrust her head into the open window near which he happened to be sitting, and rubbing her nose against the side of his head, set up another long, loud and triumphant neigh, and vanished, and they saw nothing more of her till Ebenezer Day was ready to take the field once more.

At the end of a week or so, the stranger began to sit up and talk more freely, and one Sabbath evening, as they were all together, and the squire was reading a chapter in the Bible, with the windows all open, the door-step covered with as many of the family as could be got together, for the purpose of singing a few simple tunes from Sternhold and Hopkins, with the still shadow of a huge elm resting upon the open Bible, and upon their faces, too, like the shadow of another world, the attention of the father was called



away for a moment by a low sob. He turned to see what the trouble was, and lo ! his daughter, Judith, sitting a little behind the stranger's chair, with her hand in his, one elbow resting upon his knee, the tears falling fast and large, and sobbing as if her very heart would break.

“Why, how now ?” said the father ; but, before he could finish what he had to say, the stranger lifted his hand with an air of authority, and the squire stopped short and went back to the chapter, which lay open before him upon his knees, and began reading the fourteenth chapter of John, beginning with : “Let not your hearts be troubled. Ye believe in God : believe also in me.”

But the words were no sooner uttered than poor Judith lost her self-possession altogether ; her grasp relaxed, her elbows gave way, and before the stranger, who saw her sudden palenes, could throw his arm about her waist, there she lay, with her whole length upon the floor.

The father, laying the Bible reverently upon his wife's knees, and looking at Ebenezer Day, as if astonished beyond measure at what he saw, got up and went to his poor child, and lifted her from the floor as deliberately and slowly as you would take up a sleeping babe, and carried her off to the best room, followed by the mother and the women-folk.

But Ebenezer Day opened not his mouth ; and there he sat, with both hands covering his face, and tears—yea, tears, if one may believe the witnesses—were seen trickling slowly through the fingers.

After a short absence, during which time not a



sound was to be heard from the best room, but a low whispering, and then the voice of prayer, and then of expostulation, and then of wild, passionate entreaty, and then, the breathless silence which prevailed about the door-step and the open window, was broken by the entrance of the father, with a stern, troubled countenance, and speaking as he entered, as if to comfort his poor child, though in a low, trembling voice.

He went straight up to Ebenezer Day, and, laying his hand upon his shoulder, said something—nobody knew what until months had gone by—and then, as he would not look up, nor withdraw his hands from his face, the squire lost his temper, and plucked them away with a suddenness and strength which seemed to wrench the very chair he sat on; and then the stranger looked up, and the countenance he lifted was that of a dead man—a dead prophet of the Lord—called up, like Samuel, to be profanely questioned by them that have to do with familiar spirits, like Saul and the Witch of Endor, and peep and mutter their incantations at dead of night, until they see old men wrapped in mantles, with their faces covered, “like Gods ascending out of the earth.”

“Who are you! and what are you! man or devil?” exclaimed the father, drawing back with a shudder, and planting his foot, as if prepared for the spring of a panther. “No household seems to be a bar—no house, no household safe where Ebenezer Day is once allowed to enter; the very Bible—casting his eyes upon the Book, as the stranger sat with his large palm outstretched upon the page, and with his eyes



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fixed upon a particular passage—"the very Bible seems to be no protection against your sorceries!"

Whereat a voice came up as out of the tomb, saying, in the words of Simon Peter: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

The squire stood for a moment, as if awe-struck, and then, with a bewildered air, and, with a gentle seriousness, wholly unlike his manner before, he said:

"Come with me. Judith wants to have a word with you in the presence of her mother; and, though by your enchantments you have bewitched our child, beyond all question, we are ready to pray for you, as we should for the arch-tempter himself, were he to walk the earth in a visible shape."

The stranger smiled sorrowfully, and then, with a motion of his hand, signified that he would follow the father.

As he drew near the bedside of the dying girl—for so she appeared at the time, she stretched out both arms toward him, as if she mistook him for her father, and the strange, mysterious man, stooped down and kissed her forehead, and her eyes, and smoothed her luxuriant hair, in the presence, too, of her father and mother, as if he had known her and cherished her from childhood.

More and more astonished, the father paused, with his foot lifted, at the threshold.

"Stop, sir—stop, Josiah P. May! You have dared to sit in judgment on a fellow man—you have taken a strong delusion to your heart—you have deeply wronged a fellow creature, and may have to answer for the death of a broken-hearted child."



“What mean you? What on earth have you to do with our household secrets, man of mystery?”

“Sit down, if you please, and hear what I have to say.”

The squire obeyed.

“You happen to know a young man by the name of Nathan Hale, do you not?”

The squire nodded, and looked at his daughter, who covered her face with the pillow, and turned away with a faint, low moan.

“He was at one time a favorite in this family. He came to see your daughter, I believe?”

Another nod, followed by a glance at the mother.

“And you encouraged his visits?”

“No indeed, not I, after I knew what he wanted; the good-for-nothing, lazy, shiftless vagabond, working his way through college—singing his way through, I should rather say—without a penny to begin the world with, unacquainted with work, and no farmer. Would you have me encourage a man like that? I would sooner see her married to a day laborer—to one of my farm hands—with sprawl enough to cut his own fodder!”

“I dare say; but do you know what has become of that good-for-nothing, lazy, shiftless vagabond?”

“Not I, indeed; nor do I care to know.”

“But I know, and I hope my word is enough—”

“*Your* word—and pray who are you?”

“Wait a moment, and after I have done with the business of Hale, your curiosity about me and the white-faced pacer”—the squire grew uneasy, and turned somewhat paler—“shall be satisfied. Know,



then, that young Hale is a Captain in the Continental Army, with good pay, and in high favor. What say you to that?"

"After you have told me who and what you are, and how you came into this neighborhood, and why, and how you have managed to be on such familiar terms with my daughter, in about a week—an old man like you, and a stranger? When you have answered these questions, and I know what to believe, you shall have my answer about young Hale—Captain Hale, if you say so."

"Well, then, you shall be answered. I came here with a message to your daughter, from Hale, who just fought side by side with me in the great battle of Long Island, the other day, and whom I left among the officers at Kipp's Bay, preparing to evacuate New York, and go over to Jersey. I knew the way to your house, for in my youth I was a constant visitor here—"

"*You!*—here!"

"Yes; but that was long before your day, my friend. Your mother might have been my wife but for her father, who turned me out of doors for presuming to think of her, and by his cruelty—he being a deacon of the church—made me an outcast and an unbeliever. My name you know. I am no longer what I was—a desperate man, weary of this world, careless of all that concerns another, and always ready for any adventure, however hazardous—the more hazardous the better. In a word, I am, I trust and believe, a changed man. God has dealt with me, and brought me to my senses, *I hope.*"



Here a white hand stole into his, and the pillow moved, as if with inward emotion.

“And how happened the change?”

In that dreadful snow storm we had last winter, I was riding through the whole burnt district, and over the Hampshire Grants, to wake up the people, and get them into the field in season for the campaign that opened in the spring, and I took the usual road, not knowing that the bridge was up—”

All shuddered at the change of look and the change of breathing here.

“The planks were all carried away, you know, and, as God is my judge, I rode over that awful abyss, on the stringers of the bridge, in the midst of that blinding snow-storm, and never knew the peril I had passed through, till I heard the story from the neighbors, and went back to see for myself, and found the tracks of my poor beast to prove the miracle.”

“From that moment I said to myself, and I hope to keep my promise forever, ‘As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!’”

“Give me your hand, Ebenezer Day! Hale may have Judith; but, one word more. How came you so thick with my daughter, on so short an acquaintance, and how old are you?”

“Nearly four score. Your daughter and your daughter’s mother have both been to school to me; they will answer all your other questions.”

The father stared, smiled, and appealed to his wife, who shook her head in reply, with an expression of delight never to be mistaken. But we must go back to the battle-field.



## CHAPTER VI.

## DEATH OF NATHAN HALE.

THE battle on Long Island having terminated so disastrously for the Continentals; the British being in possession of all the approaches, and wanting the city of New York for winter quarters; it became a question of life and death, in the councils of Washington, what should be done. He proposed, in a confidential communication to Congress, to fire the city, and reduce it to ashes, if they should be obliged to abandon it, but so to manage, that the blame should fall upon the British. The proposition was debated in Congress with closed doors; all the New York members having their houses and families in the devoted city—the Moscow of '77—being present, and yet, to their everlasting honor be it recorded, no slip of the project ever got abroad; and when the city *was* actually fired, and the British *were* charged with it, so faithfully was the secret kept, that all our historians have been led astray, and, up to this hour, the stigma abides upon the British!

In the midst of this alarming uncertainty, it became a matter of the last importance—or rather of the first importance—for Washington to find out the strength and the real intentions of Sir William Howe.



“Bring me a man to be trusted,” said Washington, to a stranger who had just been admitted to his presence.

The stranger reappeared, leading in Ebenezer Day.

“The very man,” said Washington; “leave us together. Mr. Day, I’m glad to see you; we want your help just now, in a matter of the greatest importance and delicacy.”

“Your Excellency, I am not the man.”

“Why not, sir?”

“I am too well known. My beast and I were a little too conspicuous on the twenty-seventh. But give me half an hour, and I will bring your Excellency the very man you want.”

“If you please.”

Before the time had expired, Ebenezer Day was at the door of Washington’s headquarters, in the City of New York, with a written order for instant admission, accompanied by Captain Nathan Hale.

“There’s your man,” said he, on leading him up to the Commander-in-Chief. “I’ll be answerable for him. I suppose I may withdraw?”

Washington bowed, and Ebenezer Day withdrew.

“Your name, sir, if you please,” said the Commander-in-Chief, after studying the countenance of the youthful soldier for a few minutes with a visible seriousness, approaching to anxiety. “I see you are a Captain, but our friend, in his hurry, forget to mention your name.”

“Hale, your Excellency—Nathan Hale.”

“Indeed, the son of that brave old man, who brought me a letter from Governor Trumbull, asking



that he might be allowed to *fight on his own hook*, as he termed it?"

"The same, your Excellency."

"How is he, do you know? I heard of his behavior, at Brooklyn heights, from an eye-witness."

Captain Hale looked up astonished.

"You had a younger brother in the engagement; and, if I recollect rightly, both were wounded. I hope not dangerously!"

How the Captain's cheek glowed; and how his eyes sparkled! It cost him an effort to reply in a voice loud enough to reach the ear of the Commander-in-Chief; and when he did, it was only to say that both were doing well.

Washington bowed, and proceeded at once to business.

"Captain Hale," said he, "I—I—" and then he walked two or three times across the room, without stopping—"I—I will not conceal from you that the service required from you now is one of great difficulty and hazard."

But the young man's eyes only sparkled the more, and his chest heaved but the more proudly.

"I am anxious to ascertain the real strength of the enemy," fixing his eyes upon the countenance of Hale, and speaking with the greatest deliberation and solemnity.

The countenance fell.

"I know what I ask, sir; and I know that, to a soldier and a man of honor, few things would be so terrible."

The young man grew paler and paler at every word.



“I say nothing of the danger to life, Captain Hale. That, of course, you are prepared for, but—” and his voice faltered.

“Enough, your Excellency, we understand each other. I know what I have to expect, if I fail, and I am prepared for it. I have but one life, would I had more for the service of my country!”

“Captain Hale, give me your hand.”

The young soldier reached forth one hand to his General, and covered his eyes with the other. It was the proudest, the happiest moment of his life; and he was afraid to trust himself with another word. At last, and with a convulsive effort, he added with a calmness which appeared to make a profound impression upon the Commander-in-Chief, “I am ready, your Excellency.”

“Be seated, Captain Hale, the work must be done at once, the sooner the better.” He then proceeded to explain his object. Information respecting the views, movements, position and strength of Sir William Howe, was to be had from the very heart of the British camp immediately, and at all hazards.

Having obtained these instructions, Hale rose and reached the door, when carried away by a sudden impulse, Washington stepped towards him, and taking his hand once more, said, “Your father shall hear of this, and your country shall do you justice, happen what may. Farewell, sir?”

Within five hours the gallant fellow was in the very heart of camp, disguised as a wagoner. Already had he measured three sides of it, and was employed upon the fourth, having ascertained the whole



effective number of their troops from the different sources, when his attention was called to a gathering of general officers. It struck him instantly that a council of war had been called, and that if he could manage to overhear the deliberations, a desperate project at the best—but a project, nevertheless, which, if carried into execution, would justify his immediate return, it would be just the thing. But how to proceed? At best, it was exceedingly irksome to be loitering about among the settlers and camp followers to play the part of a spy—but how much more irksome to be caught listening, and then, to be hung up, without having accomplished anything.

In the hope of, he hardly knew what, he contrived to saunter along near a party at work on the entrenchments, as a general officer passed. It was Sir Henry Clinton. He appeared lost in thought, pale and anxious, and took no notice of the working party. He was followed by another, a stately personage, walking arm and arm with an officer in the uniform of the British navy. From the remarks that he heard after they had passed, he found these to be Sir William Howe, the Commander-in-Chief, and Lord Howe, the British Admiral.

On hearing this, he quickened his pace, and had actually reached the rear of a tent, unperceived, in which the council were assembled, and was already in a position to hear what might be said, when a shadow shot across the turf at his feet, and the next moment he was challenged by the guard whom he encountered.

“Who goes there!”



“Now for it!” said poor Hale, and away he sprang toward a clump of tree, not fifty yards off.

The sentry fired. Another shot followed, another, and another. In a moment the whole camp was in commotion. Out rushed the Commander-in-Chief and all the general officers from the council of war, all clamoring for their horses, and impatient for explanation; the bugle sounded—the drum beat to arms. “Fall in men! fall in!” was heard from every quarter of the field. The centre of the whole British army, and a large portion of its right was now under arms. It was believed that Washington had landed, that the ships had been fired, and that the rebels were in great strength advancing upon Flatdush.

In the midst of the hubbub, poor Hale was taken, and led forthwith to Sir William Howe’s quarters.

To all questioning, he refused reply; and not until they taunted his country, would he deign to open his mouth. When called a spy and a rebel, he fixed his eyes upon the British General, and kept them there, until he heard the name of Washington coupled with an irreverent gibe. And then the brave fellow’s indignation broke forth like a lion. “George Washington a *traitor*! George Washington a *rebel*! God in his mercy forgive you, and your royal master, for driving him to such a pass! What must have been your folly, and what your crimes, before one of the best and greatest men that ever lived could be driven to take up arms against the Lord’s anointed!”

“Silence!”

“Silence, to me! Who are you, sir, that dare to command me, an American soldier, to keep silence?”



"Who are you, sir?" said the Admiral, in a mild, compassionate voice.

"My name is Hale—Nathan Hale—a Captain of infantry in the service of Congress and God Almighty. And now, sir, who are you, and what may your name be?"

The Admiral turned away in silence.

"The rankest rebel I ever yet happened to meet with, my lord, and the foulest traitor," said an old officer.

"A *rebel*, am I? And so was Hampden, and Sydney, and Sir Walter Raleigh; they were all traitors and rebels—spotted traitors and the foulest of rebels!"

"Leave the wretched man, brother; leave him to his reflections. He is evidently young, brave, and beside himself," said the Admiral, to his brother, Sir William, who stood watching the countenance of the prisoner, and hoping to see it change.

"Summon the guard, call a drum-head court-martial, and if you find him guilty, order him for instant execution—that's my idea of the matter, General. This is no time for trifling," said another.

"Der Teufel!" added De Heister, with a shrug; "das ist es nicht. De dime vor do drivle iss by long  
1 dime gone. Bei mein Gott, ya!"

A court-martial was summoned immediately. Hale was arraigned as a spy, found guilty as a spy, and the next morning *hanged as a spy*.

Once, and for a single moment, just before he was turned off, he saw, or thought he saw, looking up at him, with an expression of profound sorrow, from the



midst of the multitude below him, a countenance **that** he knew. It was that of Ebenezer Day. He felt strangely comforted, and was looking about for the horse, when the drop fell.

So perished this exemplary young man. With one single exception there was no eye to pity. Even the last consolations of religion were denied him; and the letters he wrote to his family—his mother and sisters, and to his aged father—were all destroyed. And what think you was the reason for such barbarity—the reasons urged by a British officer at the time? It was this: “They wouldn’t have the damned rebels know they had a man in their army capable of dying as Nathan Hale had died.”

Such was the death of an American martyr. Such the treatment he received at the hands of our magnanimous brethren, the British. Compare his fate with that of Andre. The treatment he received from *British*, with the treatment Andre received from the *Americans* up to the very last hour. And then—are you an American? Compare what American history has done for Hale, with what—I will not say *English* history—but with what *American* history has done for Andre, and having done that, down upon your knees, and thank God that dying for one’s country is so pleasant and so profitable, and so sure to be remembered where that country happens to be a republic.



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